SERMONS:

BY THE

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When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.—PAUL.

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TO THE READER.

The following sermons were not written with a view to their publication. They were written in the author's ordinary preparation for the pulpit, with an eye upon the spiritual state of the people of his own particular charge, and, he trusts, with a desire to promote their spiritual growth, and secure their final salvation. Nor is it probable that they would ever have been given to the public in this form, had not the writer been laid aside from his labours as pastor, by long continued ill health. It was during his long continued affliction, that the thought was suggested to him, first by a member of his own congregation, that such a volume as is now presented to the reader, would be received with satisfaction by his numerous friends, and might be useful in the churches with which he had been somewhat intimately acquainted. At this kind suggestion, desiring, if possible to prolong his usefulness, and at the same time to minister to the comfort of those who had been, under God, dependent upon him in temporal matters, he ventured to submit some of his manuscripts to some brethren in the ministry, and ask their advice respecting the matter. Such was their reply, such the kind interest which they expressed in relation to it, that he was encouraged to proceed in the enterprise.

One thing more, it is proper to say in this place. No literary excellence is claimed for these discourses. But it is hoped that the Christian reader will find in them scriptural truth, stated, illustrated and enforced in language easily understood, and not offensive to a pure and cultivated taste.

With this brief explanation, this volume is now given to the public, in the hope, and with the prayer, that it may minister to the Christian edification of some of the disciples of Jesus, and be rendered instrumental of the salvation of some into whose hands it may fall.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

This volume of sermons will, I am sure, be an acceptable offering to numerous personal friends of the author. In his present feeble state of health, I know not how he could better serve the Church and "magnify his office," than by publishing these sermons. With many others, I have ever loved to *hear* the word from the author's lips; but I had not expected to have been so much edified as I have been, in the *reading* of his discourses. It affords me pleasure to say, because I can say it in truth, that this volume of sermons is eminently adapted to do good. Let them be read, in the minister's study, in the private family, in the chamber of sickness, and in the "great congregation." For purity of language, a clear and forcible style, evangelical sentiment and happy illustration, these sermons excel. Their author has enjoyed a good measure of success in winning souls to Christ.

I am not about to write a biography of my esteemed friend, Mr. Hodges. This he has not requested me to do. But he did ask me to write an introduction to this volume; which implies, I suppose, the liberty to say some things which his modesty would not allow him to say. It is related of Cromwell, that he said to the artist, who, in taking his picture, was disposed to flatter it, by concealing some ugly scars, "Paint me as I am, or I will not pay you a shilling." To the writer of his biography, Mr. H. would doubtless say, "Paint me as I am."

To many readers of this volume, the history of its author is quite familiar. They have, more or less, heard the truth from his lips. To some of them, the gospel as preached by him, has "come in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." His natural and spiritual births, his early life, education and riper years have been enjoyed and spent in this State. Among our churches here, or in our immediate neighborhood, at Westport, N. Y., he has served in the gospel ministry for more than twenty years. Out of the many ministers that our churches, in Vermont, have sent forth, he is one of the few that have been content to abide and labor among their own people. Under these circumstances, no elaborated and complete biographical sketch is necessary, in order to enhance the interest or value of this volume. Its author has already enjoyed a better introduction to many of his readers than any thing I might be able to write could give him. And besides, it affords me pleasure to say, that the present state of his health is such as to furnish a reasonable hope that he may yet be able to resume and continue his ministerial labors for years to come. In this, none will rejoice more than the church to which he now holds the relation of pastor.

At the same time, a few words from his own private journal will be acceptable and appropriate in this place. For their introduction here, I, and not the author, am responsible.

In this Journal, I find a brief narrative of his early life, his Christian experience, and of the circumstances under which he made a public profession of his hope in Christ. From this I gather that his "childhood, until he attained to the age of fourteen, was passed in circumstances unfavorable to his spiritual interests,—in a family where God was not worshiped." He says, "I do not remember that during all this time I ever received a word of instruction in the great truths of the Bible." Of them, though an occasional atten-

dant upon public preaching, he affirms that he "knew almost nothing." His first permanent religious impression seems to have been received at about the age of thirteen, during a revival enjoyed in Leicester, his native town, under the labors of Rev. Mr. Perkins. Quite ignorant of religious experience and duty, his deep emotions were suppressed, few Christians knew any thing of them, duty was neglected, and he became again associated with the profane and Sabbath-breakers, though not without frequent compunctions of conscience.

About this time he was provided with a new home, where he was brought more directly under religious influence than ever before. It was in the family of Mr. Kinney of Salisbury. He says, "In this family I was treated as a son and a brother, and for its members I have ever cherished the most affectionate regard. Here the Holy Scriptures were read daily, and prayer was offered to the God of heaven. From the first of my residence in this family, I became a constant attendant upon the public worship of God, and soon came to feel an unwillingness to be absent.

It was not till July of 1821, when nineteen years of age that he came, after a season of pungent conviction and painful conflict, to indulge hope in Christ. Soon after, he made a public profession of religion, and united with the Congregationalist Church of Salisbury. He says, "From the first I was strongly impressed in favor of Baptist sentiments. These impressions subsequently became confirmed, and I finally united with the Baptist Church in Brandon, being baptized by Rev. Isaac Sawyer."

Some reflections upon his ministry and doctrine will be best presented and most acceptable in the author's own words.

In his private journal, under date of October 12, 1849, he says:

"Entirely laid aside from all public labors, feeble in body,

and uncertain when, or how my long continued sickness may terminate, I feel prompted to improve my time and strength, so far as I can, in recording a few remarks upon subjects of interest to me, and it may be, to some others. Of these, one is

MY MINISTRY.

"I cannot look over my ministry with unmingled satisfaction. I have often feared that my motives, in seeking admittance into the holy ministry, were not pure and right before God. Before I made a profession of religion, I had conceived a great respect for the sacred office, and when some of my friends occasionally hinted to me that I might yet be a minister, I felt a desire that I might have a place among the men composing so highly respected a class. I fear that this motive powerfully prompted me to enter the ministry: while I should have been actuated by the predominant desire to glorify God in the promotion of scriptural piety, and in securing the eternal salvation of men through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"There is another point. Although I had commenced a course of study, with a view of preparing for the great work, I was early importuned to assume a place among the heralds of the cross. Encouraged in this by some injudicious advisers, whom I respected and loved as gospel ministers, I entered upon the active duties and solemn responsibilities of the sacred work much too soon, and with very meagre qualifications. The consequence was, that while my youthful appearance, great warmth and fluency, attracted many to hear me, and I was inflated with pride, few were benefited—none were *properly instructed* in the great things of God. I look upon several of the earliest years of my ministry, with a deep conviction that I was far, very far from being acceptable to God. I was dogmatical, and gave myself much to the most uncharitable controversy. This engendered a most unhappy spirit, among Christians of different denominations,

and produced most unhappy results. I thought less of the cultivation of the graces of the Spirit, than of making converts to the dogmas of our own Church. I pray God to forgive me the sins of these years. They were sins of fearful magnitude!

"By circumstances which it is not needful to relate, I was thrown into a state of deep depression. I sometimes trembled in view of eternity. In this state of mind I tried to pray, and gave myself to the reading of books of a spiritual character. I read Doddridge's Rise and Progress, the Life of Parsons, Bunyan's Pilgrim, &c. I read them with interest and deep feeling. I trust that under God they made an abiding impression upon my heart. In some respects I have been a different man since; although I am conscious of great defects cleaving to me through my whole life to the present time.

"In regard to any improvement which I may have made in my original qualifications for the ministry, it may be proper for me to say, that it may be ascribed to three things, viz:

"1. I have not depended upon others, in any sense, for my sermons, excepting in a very few instances. My plans of sermons, and my sermons, have been my own. I have never used "Pulpit Assistants." This course has made it necessary for me to *think*.

"2. A Congregationalist minister, whose kind instructions I once enjoyed for a short time, once advised me, by all means, to be in the habit of *writing* sermons. This advice, I have endeavored to follow. Had I not done it, I never should have gained the standing in the ministry which I have enjoyed. Although I have preached much with no written sermon before me, yet, writing sermons has been to me a most important means of mental discipline.

"3. Again: my *reading* has been of a character adapted to enlarge and strengthen the mental powers. Aside from History, Travels, and the Lives of holy men, I have never relished what is styled light reading, and have never given

myself to it. I have loved to read the writings of such men as Fuller, Wesley, Harris, James, &c.. &c.

"By these means, I have been permitted to enjoy a respectable standing in the middling class of ministers—those whose labors have been well received by intelligent Christians generally. For all this, though under a constant impression of unworthiness of a place among the heralds of the cross. I would be thankful to Him, whose I am, and to whom alone I look for salvation. And O, could I be restored to comfortable health; should I be permitted again to engage in the holy work, I feel that I should do it with an eye more single to the glory of God and the great end of the ministry, than ever before. Never did the sacred work appear more lovely to me than now.

"*In my religious sentiments*, I have been a Baptist, holding substantially the faith preached by Baptist ministers, with whom I have been acquainted, and as set forth in the standard works of the denomination. In the early years of my ministry, I was an extreme Calvinist, and preached much upon the doctrine of election. But my preaching was not profitable. Subsequently, my views became very much modified on this subject, and I have experienced great satisfaction in offering the salvation of the gospel to all, without reserve, assured that whosoever will, may take the water of life freely.

"In conclusion, I am happy to say, that I regard the various evangelical denominations of this land, as holding and preaching the great doctrines of the gospel. Their differences consist more in forms of expression than in real faith. From the pulpits of various denominations, therefore, I have listened to the gospel with sincere and heartfelt satisfaction. And with the Bible before me, aiming to impress its sublime truths upon the minds of my fellow men, I trust I have seldom, for years past, given offence to any of God's children, to whatever denomination they have belonged. I believe I

can say, moreover, that I have not shunned to declare any truth, through fear of giving offence."

But I am too long detaining the reader from the sermons. With my own words I should not have done it. May the acquaintance you have now formed or renewed with their author, enhance the interest and profit with which you shall read and meditate upon the following discourses.

H. I. PARKER.

Burlington, August 20th, 1850.

SERMON I.

EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE EXISTENCE.

HEBREWS IX. 6.

But, without faith, it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

God, is the more common name of that exalted being, who has made heaven and earth, and angels and men,—who is the glorious author of all being, and the fountain of all blessedness. Faith in this exalted being, must be regarded as the beginning of all true religion in the heart of man. Without it, it is impossible to please him. "He that cometh to God," (to worship him, to commune with him, and to seek blessings at his hand,) "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

And, my brethren, is there good and sufficient ground for such faith? I do but speak the conviction of many thousand thousands of our race, when I say, there is. Nay, so clear and strong and convincing is the evidence of this great truth in the religion of the Bible, that

those who do not receive it are highly criminal,—are under the most fearful condemnation, without excuse.

It is my design on the present occasion to lead you, my brethren, to a contemplation of some branches of this evidence; and O may the Spirit of God open our hearts to perceive the truth, and direct our minds into the knowledge of the true God, and eternal life.

I. The universe around us, so far as it is within the compass of our observation and contemplation, presents convincing evidence of this sublime truth. Of this evidnce the apostle spake in Romans i. 20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse." The import of this passage of the inspired apostle, is very plain: it is, that in the things which are made, which meet our observation, and invite our contemplation on every hand, there is evidence, clear, and strong, and full, of the existence of the Godhead, and of the exercise of his own infinite intelligence, and the employment of his own eternal power.

Now the point, in all this evidence, is the manifest design of the creation, in all its manifold works. Not only do these works exist, but they exist for manifest purposes. They answer important ends, and hence, carry conviction of an *intelligent Creator*. This conviction was felt by the psalmist, when he exclaimed, "How manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

This evidence of the existence of God is minutely stated, and clearly and fully illustrated, in *Paley's Nat-*

ural Theology. I shall only state, from recollection, the general scope of his argument and illustrations. He supposes that, in passing a heath, he plunges his foot against a stone, and on picking it up, he is asked how it came there. In answer to this question, he might possibly say, for aught he knew, it had been there forever. But had it been a watch, instead of a stone, thus picked up, such a reply could not be given. But why could not the same reply be given in this case as in the other? The reason is plain. On examining the watch, it is found to be made up of several parts, so arranged as, by their action one upon another, to produce a certain result, and answer a purpose. It measures time, and points out the hour of the day. The conclusion, therefore, is unavoidable. The watch must have been planned and constructed by an intelligent artist, with a view to this very result. The watch must have been designed for the very purpose which it answers. From this illustration, he proceeds to consider the evidence of design in its various manifestations in different parts of creation. Upon the eye, as a very interesting part of the works of God, he dwells at length. The eye is shown to be an instrument, as manifestly such as is any instrument ever planned, constructed and used by man. How well it answers the purposes for which it is constructed and placed in the human frame, you all know. It is found, moreover, on examining the eyes of different creatures, whose constitution of being leads them to different modes of life, that they are so varied in their construction, as to adapt them to their appropriate modes of existence. Indeed, each creature, in all his functions and susceptibilities, is adapted to the element in which he is designed to live.

In view of this general fact, who, I ask, can doubt the existence of an intelligent Creator, of infinite perfections! Now I confess, that when I look out upon the universe around me, and contemplate the heavenly bodies in their stupendous greatness, in the relations which they sustain to each other, in the perfect regularity in which for ages and centuries they have continued to make their various revolutions;—when I look beyond the system of which our world forms but an inferior part, to the countless gems with which the heavens are bespangled, and contemplate the high probability that they are the centres of other systems, equal in vastness and importance to our own;—when I suffer imagination to pass beyond the visible heavens and look out upon boundless space, and reflect that it may be filled with worlds, inhabited by intelligent beings, capable of an infinite variety of enjoyment;—when I come down from this enchanting field, and contemplate the human race, in all their adaptations to the circumstances of their existence—so much alike in their general aspect, and yet so varied in the expression of their countenances that no two of all the millions of human beings who live upon the globe are perfectly alike;—when I consider the almost endless variety of existence upon the earth, and the wonderful adaptation of each creature to his own place in the scale of existence;—and finally, when I consider man—his physical organization, his mental and moral constitution, his relations to beings and things around him, and his manifest adaptation to the knowledge, love and enjoyment of a Supreme Being, I cannot doubt that such a being exists.

Yes, my brethren, there is a God. We must be blind indeed not to see the impress of his hand, the

manifestations of his wisdom and power, on every side. But—

II. The history of the human family furnishes evidence of this great truth—the being of God.

An attentive reader of the history of the world during the past ages of its existence, can scarcely fail to perceive that its affairs have been under the exercise of a providential government. In the rise, the progress, and the subversion of empires and kingdoms, we may trace most important and grand results, through a long succession of causes, till we arrive at points where we are in a manner compelled to pause, and, with reverence and awe, confess that all has originated in the designs of an overruling Power. These results, moreover, often of surpassing importance to the interests of men, seem neither to have been designed, or even thought of, by those who have been the instruments of them.

As an illustration of this point, I may refer you to the case of Joseph. Joseph was a youth exceedingly dear to the heart of his now aged father. The fondness of that father excited the envy of his older brethren. They came to hate him, and set themselves to devise some plan to put him out of their way. The result is familiar to you all. He was sold into Egypt, where, after most painful trials and cruel sufferings, he was raised to a station of high honor and most important trust. In the exercise of his high authority, he became the temporal saviour of his aged and venerated father, and of those very brethren who had been the authors of so unnatural a crime against him.

Now it is certain, that the brethren of Joseph were far from designing his future greatness, when they sold

him into a strange land as a slave. Their single design was, to put him out of their way and prevent him from rising to that eminence over themselves, which seemed to be foreshadowed by his dreams. And yet, when the varied, and, in many respects, exceedingly painful events of his early life had become matters of history, the whole were attributed to the manifest and gracious design of an overruling Providence—"God," said the pious Joseph, "God meant it for good."

The planting and growth of this nation, furnish further illustration of this point. It was the spirit of intolerance that drove the pilgrims from their native land, to seek a home in this then wilderness land. They faced all the perils of the ocean, and of the wilderness, with their eye upon this boon, the privilege of worshiping God according to their own convictions of truth and duty. And what has been the result? It is known to all. It may be stated in few words. The little band has become a strong nation. Yes, here we have a mighty nation, unsurpassed in the known world, in the civil and religious freedom, and the civil and religious privileges of its citizens—a nation which is destined to exert an influence for good upon the whole world.

Now nothing is more certain, than that such a result was far from the designs of those, who by their unrighteous oppressions drove our fathers from their cherished homes. Their only design was, to rid the land from that strictness of doctrine, and spirituality of life, to which, in their worldliness, they felt the deepest aversion. And yet, the result of that very oppression, has been the wider diffusion of the principles which they hated, and sought to exterminate from the world. Nor

did the pilgrims themselves even contemplate or anticipate results so glorious. They did not intend *so much* as the establishment of religious freedom to all. They only sought it for themselves, in their own peculiar views. But, that which never entered into their plans, through them has been brought to pass, to the exceeding joy and happiness of millions. Now when we trace these vast and beneficent results back through the succession of causes by which they have been brought about, how is it possible that we should fail to perceive evident manifestations of design at every step! How shall we stop short of the conclusion, that there is a Supreme Being, who, seated upon his own throne, with all elements and influences under his controll, and seeing and perfectly comprehending the end from the beginning, "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

But let us glance at another consideration before we leave this branch of the subject. Prophets have lived, who have professedly spoken in the name of God. They have spoken of many of the prominent events in the history of men, while those events were yet in the distant future. The rise and fall of kingdoms and empires was thus foretold, and these prophecies have been fulfilled to the very letter. The coming, ministry and sufferings of Christ were foretold, and beyond all contradiction, these prophecies have been fulfilled in the interesting events narrated in the Gospels. The resurrection of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the spread and glorious triumph of the religion of Jesus, were plainly foretold, and who can doubt the fulfilment of all? And, finally, the destruction of Jerusalem, the long dispersion of the Jews, and their reproach among

all the nations, were spoken of while as yet all was future. And I ask—Has any thing of it all failed to come to pass? Verily, not a word of all has failed. All has been fulfilled, or is now taking place in the face of the world. Now the prophets must, in some way, have seen the future—in many instances the far distant future. But they all disclaim the independent possession of any such power or prescience. They ascribe it to God alone, in whose name they spoke. "Thus saith the Lord,"—"The word of the Lord came unto me," &c. &c. were phrases with which their prophecies were introduced. With all this before us, how can we doubt that these great events are within a wise, a far reaching and powerful providential government! How can any reflecting man, harbor a doubt that the administrator of that government is God, the creator and preserver of all things, and that his servants received this knowledge of the future from him? But I remark—

III. That this sublime doctrine has been embraced, and deeply impressed upon the hearts of the great and the good of every age.

Do we consult the patriarchs of old, they bear united and strong testimony to the being of God. Their *whole lives speak* the existence and glory of the Deity. Their conversation at all times and in all places, shows plainly that their minds were constantly and profoundly impressed with the conviction of this truth. They lived and endured, "as seeing him who is invisible." Do we consult the lives of apostles and primitive Christians, they speak the same thing, in a manner not less plain and convincing. Nay, we may read the faith and witness the depth of their conviction, in the martyr

blood, so freely and so copiously shed in attestation of the truth, so much dearer to their hearts than even life itself. And, from the apostolic age to the present, who and what are the men who have borne witness to the one true and living God, and who and what are the men that have said, "*There is no God*"? It must be conceded, that sound learning, patient research and profound thought, united with purity of character, have ever given their testimony to the great truth under consideration, while on the other hand, "the fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*"

Now I do not blush to acknowledge that this fact, considered in connexion with the other arguments to which I have called your attention, does contribute to the overpowering weight of evidence by which my own mind is firmly settled in the faith of the being and glory of God; and I am unable to see why it should not so influence the candid who seek to know and receive the truth, every where.

But before I leave this subject, I have one remark more to make. It is this: The testimony of the great, the wise, and the good, touching this important question, has often come with its greatest clearness, and strength, and power, at the last.

The God we adore, inhabiteth eternity. There his unbeclouded glory is seen in its greatest effulgence. It is natural to suppose, therefore, that those who believe in him, and are devoted to his love and service, will receive deeper and more joyful impressions of his being and glory, as they come nearer to his everlasting abode, and anticipate their final entrance into his immediate presence. Such has been the case. Yes, the God of the Bible has often manifested himself to his servants,

as they have approached the close of their earthly toils, in such clearness and fulness as has filled them with unutterable awe, and inspired them with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." In this near approach to Jehovah,—under these deep and blissful impressions of his being and glory, they have spoken of him in language almost unearthly. Mark the language of Paul the aged, as he drew nearer to the world of spirits: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." This language is strong, and indicates the most prefect assurance of the divine existence. To the writer, his own being was not more real, than was that of God, the fountain of all being and the source of all blessedness.

Equally clear and full were the manifestations which were made to the blessed Stephen, when suffering martyrdom for the truth's sake. Lifting his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed, "I see heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." And so filled was he with glory and God, that his face shown as if it had been the face of an angel. Now, who I ask, can contemplate this scene, and consider the language of this suffering and triumphant saint, and not feel that there is a God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and working wonders throughout his universe! I will only add, that similar manifestations have been enjoyed by many thousands, who have spoken of the God they loved, as they have approached the moment of their entrance into his bliss-inspiring presence, in language of

adoring love and convincing force. But I must not detain you longer. With a word of solemn appeal I close.

My brethren, there is a God. Besides him there is no other God. In every possible perfection he is infinite. Rightly contemplated, heaven and earth are full of his glory. He is our God. He made us of clay and formed us men. In him we all live and move and have our being. Not a blessing have we ever enjoyed, but has been conferred by him. In this very instant our breath is in his hand. He has but to turn his hand and the scenes of our mortal life are closed up at once, and we must appear in his presence. What then are our obligations to him? Should we not name him with reverence and awe, at all times and in all places? Should we not earnestly seek to know his will, and devote ourselves unceasingly to its performance. Nay, my brethren, we are bound to consecrate our whole being, in all our susceptibilities and powers, to him, by an obligation unspeakably strong and perpetual in duration. O then, in this moment, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your God, and consecrate yourselves to him forever. And O thou infinite, thou eternal being, by thy Spirit, through the revelations thou hast made of thyself, impress each heart with a deep and abiding conviction of thine own being and power and glory, and so influence us, that during the rest of our lives we may continue in thy fear all the day long.—AMEN.

SERMON II.

THE DIVINE EXCELLENCE.

PSALM VIII. 1.

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

It is said that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Hence the scriptures, written under their inspiration, are received as the word of God. And, my brethren, it is not at all uncommon for men of pious hearts, when reading the divine word, to feel the kindlings of deep, and often joyful emotions. They feel its enlightening power, and behold in it, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and as they contemplate his glory they feel the delightful emotions of love and adoration. Nay, they sometimes become enraptured with the view, and swallowed up in love divine. And is it not probable that these emotions were felt by the holy men by whose divine communications they are kindled in our hearts? Doubtless they were. As God manifested his glory to them, and moved them to

declare it for the benefit of their own and succeeding generations, they felt, in all its fulness and blessedness, the sweet, the sublime emotion of adoring love. This may account for the numerous exclamations of love and adoration and praise which we meet in the divine scriptures. David had been led to a contemplation of the majesty and glory of the "*Lord most high*," as it is displayed in his wonderful works, above, beneath, and all around, till his whole soul was enraptured with the view. Then he gave vent to his feelings in the language of our text, and in numerous other adoring exclamations. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."

On a recent occasion, I attempted, my brethren, to impress your minds with a conviction of the being of God; and I would now lead you to a contemplation of his excellency; and O may the Spirit of him whom we would know more perfectly,—whose name we would more perfectly love, and more worthily magnify, shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the divine glory, that through this knowledge, we may at last be prepared to dwell in his glorious presence forever more!

The import of the term "excellent," as applied to men, is well understood. We say of one who manages his pecuniary affairs, or those which may be committed to his care by others, with superior skill and success, he is an excellent financier. Of the scholar, who, by a wise arrangement of his time, and close application to study, makes rapid progress in the discipline of his

mind and in the acquisition of sound and useful knowledge, He is an excellent scholar. Of the author, who, having a clear and strong perception of truths which he would communicate to others, expresses those truths in language chaste, and clear, and forcible, He is an excellent writer. Of a person who is distinguished for the kindly dispositions of his heart, He is of an excellent spirit. Thus it was said of Daniel, "An excellent spirit was in him."

Now the psalmist had observed the comparative excellence of some among men, for in his day there was true piety and moral loveliness in some of our fallen race. But, when he contemplated the character of Jehovah, the maker and Lord of the universe, as presented before his mind by the enlightening power of the divine Spirit, all human excellence was shaded. Now, nothing that had been esteemed as great, or wise, or noble, or powerful, or lovely among men, could for a moment compare with the divine excellence. No, the name of the Lord was excellent in *all the earth*. His glory was set above the heavens. He was *supreme* in excellence.

In contemplating the excellence of our Lord, the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, I remark—

I. He is self-existent. He is independent of all, having derived his existence from no other. This truth, though to us incomprehensible, is nevertheless a glorious truth. We have existence, ourselves. Our own existence is interesting and wonderful. With a proper understanding of the laws of our being, and strict conformity to those laws, in all our pursuits and pleasures, our being may be truly blessed, and speak to the

praise of his goodness who gave it. We are surrounded with being on every hand, of amazing variety in its constitution. The study of this flood of existence, (if I may speak thus,) in its almost infinitely varied forms and susceptibilities, is an interesting employment. But from whence all these existences, from man, the Lord of this lower world, down to those inferior creatures, which seem to constitute the connecting link between animate and inanimate creation? Not one of all is self-existent. Not one of them all, but is dependent upon a higher power for preservation, and all the happiness of which he is capable. All must be traced to the great Author of all being. All these are the works of God, who is styled Lord of the creation. To him, as the great fountain of being, the devout may look up with adoring wonder, and exclaim, "How manifold are thy works, Lord God almighty. In wisdom hast thou made them all!"

And, my brethren, if it is interesting to comtemplate existence around us, in its incomprehensible wonders, how much more so must it be to follow these streams up to the great source of all existence, and there look out upon eternal, unoriginated being, and contemplate that divine glory which shall be forever telling, yet *untold*. In this respect, my brethren, how excellent is the name of the Lord our God over all creatures in heaven or earth!

II. God, the Lord our Lord, is an *omnipresent being*. In this respect he is excellent over all. Other beings can be in and know the scenes of but one place at a time: but his presence is all-pervading; there is no place in the wide universe which is not filled with his

presence. God is every where. This he has declared in his own word. Addressing the children of men, he says, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" With the conviction of this divine attribute, the psalmist was deeply and joyfully impressed, when he exclaimed, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there; or if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." It was in the conscious possession of this mysterious attribute, moreover, that the Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "Where two or three shall be gathered together in my name, *there am I in the midst of them.*" Now our blessed Saviour is truly and properly divine. He is styled, "*God with us.*" Yes, he is God with man, every where. The devout and true worshipers of God may be gathered together in a thousand thousand different places in this land,—they may be gathered together in numerous groups in the islands of the seas, or assembled in companies in the most distant lands, and worshiping in the most diversified languages; and yet, amidst them all, the divine presence may be sensibly felt and enjoyed. Verily, in view of this truth, "How excellent is the name of 'our' Lord in *all the earth*, who has set his glory above the heavens." But—

III. Jehovah, our Lord, is excellent above all in knowledge. He is omniscient.

The knowledge of creatures is circumscribed to comparatively narrow limits. By patient study we gain

some knowledge of things around us. Nay, the mind of man has been able to look beyond the world on which we dwell, and which, according to the inspired word, is *given* to the sons of men, to other worlds, and of them some knowledge has been gained. And yet, at every step in this knowledge, new and unfathomable mysteries rise up before us, so that the knowledge we gain does but lead us to realize more fully, how little we know of the deep things of God—of the vastness of his dominions, and the countless wonders of his works. But to God, all things are known. Not an event, small or great, past, present or to come—not a principle, a law, a relation—not a thought, a desire, a motive, throughout all the vastness of his own eternal dominions, but is known, and perfectly comprehended in his omniscient mind. The mind of the psalmist was deeply impressed with a sense of this great truth, when he addressed the Lord, most high, in the following strains of deep humility and awe: "Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Contemplating this mysterious attribute of Jehovah, well might the psalmist exclaim, as in the text, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" In this respect, he has no equal in the universe.

IV. Jehovah, our Lord, is excellent above all, in *power*.

He alone is omnipotent. "Lo, this have I heard, that power belongeth unto God."

If we concede that all things were made by him—and who can doubt it?—then what must be our impressions of his power? Let us contemplate the world in which we live, in its vastness, in its wonders,—the heavens, the work of God's hands,—the sun, the moon and the stars, and reflect that all are sustained and controlled by him, and we cannot fail to be inspired with awe, in view of the excellent greatness, the incomprehensible power of the Lord.

There are other views which we may take of the divine power. It has been displayed, somewhat frequently, in the sight of men. When the time drew near for the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, to prepare the way for that great event, God visited the king and the people of Egypt with such manifestations of his power, as might well inspire them with awe, and constrain them to loose their grasp upon his long oppressed people. The waters of the rivers, the winds of heaven, the rain, the hail, the lightning and thunder, were all at his perfect control. At his own omnipotent will, the waters became blood, the hail swept with destruction in its course over the land, and the lightning and thunder spread terror and dismay throughout the whole land of Israel's oppressing monarch, till the terror-stricken multitude were awed under a sense of the power of Israel's God. Again: after the people had commenced their journey, they were brought into a great strait. Before them was the Red Sea. On each hand, they were shut in by mountains, and behind them were the Egyptian hosts, bent on their destruction. In these

circumstances, what could they do? Where could they look for deliverance? There was a deliverance at hand. The God of their fathers was with them; his word had power to save. At his bidding, the waters of the sea were divided, and the chosen tribes passed them in safety; while at the same omnipotent bidding, the Egyptians were overwhelmed by the waters, and met their final overthrow in the deep. In these scenes, we see an exhibition of divine power, calculated to inspire all who contemplate it, with reverence and awe. What are we, my brethren—what the mightiest men—before him who worketh such wonders of power? And, I may add, through all their journeyings, till their tribes were finally settled in the land of promise, God was with them, manifesting, on numerous occasions, his wonderful power. Were they in want of food, it was daily given them in bread from heaven. Were they suffering from thirst, at God's command the rock gave them water. Indeed, it would seem that in all their journeyings, not a day passed in which the power of God did not, in some way, pass before them.

In later ages, the Lord of glory has manifested himself to the world in another, and I may say more endearing manner. In the person of the Son, he became incarnate and sojourned among men,—God manifest in the flesh. During this period he made frequent manifestations of his power. Did he speak to the sick, to the blind, to the deaf, his word was omnipotent to heal. Was he surrounded by multitudes who in their eagerness to listen to his teachings, fainted for the bread of this life, by an act of creative power their necessities were supplied. Were the lives of his disciples in jeopardy from the fierceness of the wind and

the violence of the sea, at his omnipotent command they were hushed to a calm. Nay, at his command even death gave up its prey, and the son, and a brother, were restored to their weeping friends. These manifestations of divine power produced their effect on the minds of many who witnessed them. They inspired them with awe, and constrained them to acknowledge the divinity of the Lord Jesus.

Now, contemplating the scenes and works to which I have alluded, whether under the ancient dispensation or during the ministry of our blessed Lord, we may well exclaim, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." But—

V. God is excellent above all, in the attribute of Justice.

Throughout all the grades of moral and intelligent existence, there are important relations, by which creatures are bound to each other, and ultimately to the throne of the Eternal. These relations are vastly varied, and serve most important purposes. Out of these, arise mutual obligations among creatures, and ultimately, the universal obligation of all intelligent creatures to love God, the great author of their being, with all their hearts, and in all things to obey him. There is, therefore, among men, and between men and their Creator, right and wrong. Touching this point, what is right and what is wrong, in this fallen world, confused and exceedingly erroneous notions are prevalent. But, my brethren, in the divine mind, all is clear and plain. To him, the right, through all the vast range of moral obligation among creatures, is perfectly known. And by him the right is commended, and the wrong

forbidden, with proper and adequate rewards on the one hand, and penalties on the other. In this we see the infinite justice of the Supreme Being.

And here I would press the question, Does not a careful consideration of the law given to men, lead unavoidably to the conclusion, that justice and judgment are the habitation of the divine throne? Who that candidly and with care studies the divine law, in its precepts and prohibitions, can rise from such study unimpressed with a sense of its equity, its perfect justice? Who can specify the point at which it could be amended? Surely, no one. All must, after such a consideration of it, respond to the declaration of the inspired writer, "The Law of the Lord is perfect." The history of the human family, in which are registered the great as well as more minute events of God's providential government, clearly and strikingly displays the justice of the eternal throne. In that history, the proud, the wicked of every class, are seen to be pursued and finally overtaken by the divine displeasure, though apparently, for a time, flourishing in their crime and guilt. There, too, the meek, the righteous, though often suffering long, are seen to be the objects of divine regard, and sure of reward in the end. The truth of this, who can doubt? Yet, for the full and perfect administration of justice to all, we must look to the great day of final judgment. Then, before an assembled universe, God will render to every one according to what he shall have done. And, so clear and full will be the revelations of that day, so manifest the bearings of every man's life and works upon the interests of the universe, that the last, the irrevocable sentence, which shall be passed, both upon the righteous and the wicked, by the intelligent universe,

will be pronounced JUST. Then will the excellence of the Lord our Lord, in justice, be celebrated by all the holy, in songs of divine rapture.

VI. And finally, the Lord our Lord is excellent in mercy.

Mercy is the exercise of favor, where it is not deserved. It would seem, therefore, to be opposed to justice, because it spares the guilty, upon whom that justice would inflict merited wrath. They meet and harmonize, however, through the mediation of Christ the son of God, the Saviour of men. Into a consideration of this mediation, so mysterious, and yet so glorious, I cannot now enter. It is sufficient, for the present, to proclaim the great truth, that when our race lay in ruin, exposed to perish in eternal banishment from God, and from the glory of his power, divine mercy prompted Jehovah to devise an expedient, through which he might extend to, and save the guilty and perishing, and yet maintain the dignity and integrity of his own government. In Jesus Christ, therefore, as Mediator, mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other. And O my brethren, how amazing is the mercy of God! He has spared our race in the midst of deserved wrath. He has done it in a way that has excited the wondering admiration of angels. Of this mercy, the devout psalmist has sung in the animating strains, "The mercy of the Lord is great" —"The mercy of the Lord endureth forever."

One remark more. Mercy finds its field of operation, so far as we know, exclusively among our race. Man, poor, fallen, guilty man, is the object of divine mercy. In man, mercy will display its everlasting glories, to

the admiration and joy of an intelligent universe. Other beings have sinned: but, for reasons known to the divine mind—reasons sufficient and just, they were passed by, while to us mercy is extended. Out of our race, countless millions will be raised up, and shine forever to the praise and glory of divine grace. How can this consideration, rightly viewed, fail to impress us with the deepest humility, and inspire us with adoring love and gratitude. But I hasten to close.

My brethren, I have attempted to impress your minds with a sense of the excellency of God, our maker, our rightful Lord and sovereign. And now, suffer me affectionately to press upon your attention, the question—What are your feelings toward him? God is self-existent. From everlasting to everlasting, he is God. God is present every where. He fills heaven and earth. From the notice of his eye, none can conceal himself. God is infinite in knowledge. Of all that is past, of all that is to come, of all that is thought, or said, or done, by any creature throughout his boundless dominions, his knowledge is perfect. Beyond his knowledge, there is, there can be nothing known. God is infinite in power. To all that exist, he has given being. All is momentarily upheld by him. All elements are subject to his control. Whatever he wills, positively is done. When he speaks, it stands fast. In him we all live, and move, and have our being. Every living man, rightly viewed, is an evidence of the supreme and all-pervading power of him who inhabits eternity. God is just. All that is right, he contemplates with pleasure, and to him all that is wrong, is abhorrent. The right will surely be approved and rewarded, while the wrong will as certainly meet a just recompense of wrath. God, among

men, is merciful. In the exercise of his mercy, he seeks to turn us from our sins, and through the mysterious plan of redemption, save us from merited wrath, and restore us to his own favor. Such, my brethren, is our God. And now I solemnly ask, what are your feelings toward him? Should not the being who has given you being, who upholds and blesses you from hour to hour, who seeks to bless you with eternal life and blessedness in himself, be remembered, and reverenced, and sought, and loved, and served, by us all? Yes, verily, he should. And can you then delay to yield yourselves to him at once, according to the requirements of his word? O I beseech you, in the name of him who by his own blood has made our return to his favor possible. Delay in this case is fraught with damning criminality. In this moment, conscious that the eye of God is upon you, yield your hearts to his claims. O God, by thy Spirit press thy claims upon the hearts of this people, till the spirit of resistance shall give way to that of sweet submission and love.—Amen.

SERMON III.

MAN, CONSIDERED IN HIS CAPACITIES, RELATIONS AND DESTINY.

PSALM VIII. 4.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him?

As God has come near to holy men, and manifested his glory to them, while they have been filled with reverence and awe toward him, they have been overwhelmed with a sense of their own insignificance, their comparative nothingness before him. Job was one of the most excellent among men. He was an object of especial divine regard, and yet, when God came near to him, and caused his power and glory to pass before him, he was overwhelmed with awe, and a sense of self-abasement, and exclaimed, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The prophet Isaiah was another, highly distinguished among the most excellent of the earth, and highly honored of God, and yet, when the world of light, the glorious habitation of the *Most High*, was

opened to his view;—when he saw the king, the Lord of Hosts, and his train which filled the temple, he exclaimed, "Wo is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And thus it was with the psalmist. He had been led to contemplate the glory of God as it was manifested in the magnificent works of his power, till, overwhelmed with a sense of the ineffable glory of the Creator, he gave vent to his feelings in the language of the text and context: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon, and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

Now it seems that the psalmist, while enjoying a clear and strong view of the infinite majesty and glory of the almighty Maker of the worlds, was deeply humbled under a sense of the comparative nothingness of himself, and his race. And yet, the fact that he and his fellow creatures were made the objects of the notice and kind regards of the Creator, the Lord of glory, impressed his mind with a sense of the high destiny of man. True, man was a creature comparatively short-sighted, limited in knowledge, and constantly and entirely dependent,—living, moving and having his being in God; and yet he was seen to be the object of divine notice. God, the great, the infinitely blessed God, was mindful of him, and condescended to visit him. Surely, a being thus regarded and visited by the Lord of earth and heaven, must be created to some

high purpose, some noble end! Thus reasoned and felt the holy man, who, by inspiration of God, wrote the text now under consideration.

I have attempted, on late occasions, my brethren, to impress your minds with a sense of the being of God, and of his excellency in all the earth. I now desire to lead you to a contemplation of man, as a creature of God, and an object of his consideration and regard. And O may the Lord, our Maker, direct our contemplations, so that we may truly know ourselves, and by his favor, act worthy of our high origin, our interesting and far-reaching relations, and our final and most important destiny.

In pursuance of the design announced, I remark—

I. Man is an intelligent being. He is endowed with intellectual powers, by which he is capable of contemplating the works of the Creator around him, in their wonderful variety, their interesting and wisely arranged relations, and their manifest and benevolent designs. He can trace effects up to their immediate and more remote causes, and then, by careful observation of existing causes, anticipate, with great precision, future effects. The knowledge which he acquires, he can store away in the chambers of his mind, and render it subservient to his own, and the happiness of others. He is capable of great advancement in knowledge. The careful student of men and things around him, may add to the fund of his knowledge daily through the whole of his life upon earth, and thus increase the measure of his intellectual enjoyment to the very end of his stay in this world.

Evidence of all this is abundant all around us. Wit-

ness the observing tendencies of the human mind, in earliest childhood. Consider its early inquisitiveness, as manifested in the thousand questions with which the parent or early friend is pressed. Mark the progress of the young mind, as it passes on from one field to another in the acquisition of knowledge, ever thirsting for fuller drafts. Contemplate the man of meridian strength, as he wields the power of knowledge already acquired, for the accomplishment of purposes dear to his own heart, and, perchance, deeply and widely affecting the interests of thousands around him, while still, in the effects of his own doings and in the scenes ever open around him, he perceives, and from them gathers, new treasures of knowledge. And, once more, observe the man of many years, from whose brow the sprightliness of youth and the firmness and resolution of manhood have passed away, giving place to the more contemplative visage of old age. Here, while to some extent memory lives upon the past, and hope reaches forth to the brighter future, comfort is drawn from the stores of knowledge gathered in former years, and high satisfaction is derived from the never-ceasing investigations and gatherings of the intelligent mind. True, men are often unhappy. Multitudes pass their lives in degradation and misery. They seem never to think of rising above the lowest grades of intelligence. Their highest enjoyment consists in sensual gratification, and intercourse with others of their grade. This, however, is not a sound objection against our argument, since this state of things is accounted for in the apostasy of man. But for sin, man would never have been thus degraded.

I remark again: It is his intelligence that places

man over the works of God's hands upon the earth. His superiority in this respect seems to be felt, and in a manner acknowledged, by the inferior creatures of the earth; for although many of them are vastly his superior in physical strength, yet is the dread of man upon them all. There is a power in the intelligent human countenance which is felt by the most ferocious of animals, by which they have been subjected to his will.

I have spoken of the ability of the intelligent mind of man, to trace effects up to their causes. To this point, I have all along designed again to recur. This I now do for the purpose of remarking, that in the exercise of this power, man advances from step to step, till he arrives at that ultimate point, from whence he must contemplate the great first cause. Here the intelligent mind must acknowledge the being of Him who hath contrived and built all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created. Here, in the eternity and all the attributes and perfections of infinite excellence, is ample scope for the present, the future, the everlasting exercise of all his powers as an intelligent being.

Such, in this respect, is man, of whom God is mindful, and whom he condescends to visit.

II. Man is endowed with a moral nature.

By virtue of this nature, man is capable of loving and serving God, the glorious author of his being, and of the enjoyment of the divine approbation. Nay, the knowledge, the love and service of God, and the consciousness of his favor, are entirely essential to his full happiness. It is true, that, in the language of a living writer of distinguished merit, "Humanity hath separated itself from God." This it has done by sin. Yes, man is

now under condemnation. His moral nature, high as it is, and benevolent and exalted as were the ends to which it was adapted, is fallen and deposed. Though it still retains its high capacity for enjoying God, it is so corrupted as to be disinclined to seek the knowledge and love of its great original, as the only adequate source of satisfaction. Thus cut off from God, it is ever seeking and vainly striving to join itself to some object which shall satisfy its ceaseless cravings. I say vainly striving; for where, in all the range of creature objects, is one that is equal to the moral capacities of man? Alas, it does not exist. Does man turn away from his Maker, the fountain of living waters, he can only hew to himself broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Hence the disquietude, the restlessness, the depression, and often the sighs of human beings; have what they may, they want more. Though surrounded by all the advantages of wealth—though admired and caressed by friends—though loaded with titles of honor, conferred by mortals of their own race, yet something more is wanting. Why is it thus? My brethren, in this very fact I see striking evidence of the doctrine which I have stated. In this very disquietude and restlessness, I see evidence of the high moral capacity of man. Often, as I see my fellow men pressing on through this life in the eager pursuit of creature objects, I am ready to exclaim, unhappy man, little do you realize what it is that moves you on to all your exertion and strife. Little do you realize the disappointments which await you in your present course. Little do you appreciate what it is that your higher nature demands for its full satisfaction—its complete blessedness. Reason as you may—shift your pursuits as you will, the aching void

within you must become still more painful, in spite of all your acquisitions from any and every creature source. Did you possess THE WORLD, still you would be unblessed! And to you, my brethren, I must say emphatically, earnestly, you are endowed with a nature too high, of capacities too vast, to be satisfied with things earthly, though possessed in greatest abundance. You have a nature which never can rest till it embraces the deity in the plentitude of his uncreated excellence. You were created to know, to love, to serve, and to be blessed in God. Without God, man cannot be fully blessed. Uncheered, uncomforted, and unblessed by his complacent smile, the consciousness of his favor—his loving kindness, his soul must be more and more desolate, till at last it shall sink in all the misery of absolute and hopeless destitution. The language of an apostle is big with most solemn meaning: "Having no hope, and without God in the world!"

Here, then, let us turn again, for a moment, to the question, What is man, that God should be mindful of him? &c. The answer, though imperfect, is before you. He is a creature of God, endowed with a nature more exalted than is possessed by any other creature on the earth. He is made but a little lower than the angels. He has capacities which render him capable of the most endearing union with the infinite Creator, which qualify him to enjoy the ever unfolding glories of Him, the praise of whose excellence is yet to echo through all the realms of a boundless universe, and which can never be satisfied with any thing less!—But—

III. Man is immortal. He is on the grand round of an eternal existence.

It is true that a change, a most solemn and important change, awaits every living man upon earth. Death is before us all. But then, what is death? It is not the end of being to man; it is but his passage from this to another state of existence. In that state of existence, the soul, with all its powers, its susceptiblities, must continue forever.

This important, and when realized, startling truth, lies on the face of the inspired writings. The psalmist, inspired from above with strong anticipation, looked up to the right hand of God, where were "pleasures forever more." The Messiah, in the days of his flesh, assured his disciples of eternal life. In hope of this eternal life, all the apostles and other Christians spent their lives in watchings, in prayer and self-denying labors. From martyrdom even, as an entrance into their final home in heaven, they did not shrink.

Nor shall the righteous alone, exist forever. Do men pass from this world to the world of spirits, unprepared for a participation in the joys of eternal life! Do they appear in the world of spirits, in all the depravity of fallen humanity, with their moral nature in a state of enmity against God, the only fountain of true blessedness, still they must exist, but they must exist in a state of banishment from God, and from the glory of his power—in what the pen of inspiration has styled, "Outer darkness—the blackness of darkness forever."

O think my beloved brethren, of eternal existence! Be persuaded to look forward to your own future being, which shall be during as eternity! Let the solemn thought, that, now in being, you can never, *no never*, NO NEVER, cease to be—that with you, consciousness, and memory, and reflection, and feeling, will never cease—

when millions of ages shall have passed away, still you will be in existence, on the inconceivable round of millions of ages yet to come. O eternity! Who can comprehend it, or begin to form any adequate conception of its vastness! And yet, the import of that solemn word must be experienced by us all. When all the changing scenes of this mortal life shall have passed—when we ourselves shall have passed beyond the veil of time, then shall we begin to know something of eternity—then shall we begin to comprehend something of the grandeur, the awfulness of eternal existence.

And yet, another thought presents itself at this point. Man is susceptible of progression in knowledge, in power, and in happiness, through all his future existence. This may be inferred from his known progress in knowledge and intellectual strength in the present life. If men in this imperfect state advance in knowledge and intellectual power, till, in a manner comprehending the invisible laws of the physical world, they make those laws subservient to the purposes of life, what are the heights to which they may attain in a perfect state, unchecked by any of the hindrances which surround them here! If in this state men arrive at a point where they can measure the distances of the planets—calculate their size, and the velocity of their movements, to what an extent may they not comprehend the works of God, in the progress of their future unending being. If here men attain to such a knowledge of the infinite fountain of being, as fills them with wonder and unspeakable joy, what may they not know of him, when admitted into his immediate presence above?

Such is man in this respect. As such, he is noticed

by the Maker of the universe. And, my brethren, how should we regard ourselves, in view of this solemn consideration? What importance is attached to our being, in view of its endless duration, and the heights to which we may rise in our future state?

IV. Man is a being sustaining interesting and widely extended relations.

Our relations to the Creator of all, in one respect, have been contemplated. On that point of surpassing interest, I cannot speak more at length now. Nor can I do more than glance at the relations which we sustain to other beings. That man is related to man, is conceded by all. We know that such are the relations existing between men, that they may minister to each others' happiness, to a very great extent. Indeed, our social enjoyments are to be reckoned among our highest enjoyments in the present life. Our pleasures here are often greatly heightened by being shared with friends of congenial views and feelings. Hence the pleasure usually experienced in extending our acquaintance, and enlarging the circle of trust-worthy and confiding friends.

But man is yet to know a wider relationship. The apostle, addressing the Hebrew Christians, said: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels—to the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven."

From this passage, it is plain that holy men will yet be introduced to an acquaintance and companionship with other great branches of the universal family of God. They will yet be raised to fellowship with

angels in their high and holy joys. They will participate in the knowledge of those holy beings who have never sinned, sympathy and communion with whom will heighten immeasurably their everlasting joys. Nor will this be all. The songs of the redeemed, and the wonders of divine grace displayed in their redemption, will swell the raptures of the angelic hosts. The song of redeeming love will perfect the harmony of heaven forever. Exalted companionships! Blessed, thrice blessed fellowships! But I must close with a word of exhortation.

We have seen, my brethren, that man, although fallen and degraded, occupies a high rank in the scale of being. His final destiny is most exalted. Have you contemplated all this? Are you suitably impressed with a sense of it? Are you living under the influence of such impressions? Some, I trust, are. You keep your latter end, your high relations, and your future exalted destiny, in view, and are striving to rise in intelligence and moral excellence to a more perfect meetness for the blessedness which awaits you. Still on! Your efforts, assisted by divine grace, shall not be in vain. But are not many of you living as though it was

> "All of life to live,
> And all of death to die?"

O pause, I beseech you, and think! No longer live like creatures of a day. Rise and live for eternity!—AMEN.

SERMON IV.

UNIVERSAL SINFULNESS OF MAN.

ROMANS III. 23.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

In this connexion, the apostle labored to establish and illustrate the great doctrine of justification by faith, and salvation by grace. To this end, he proved, by a lucid and most conclusive chain of reasoning, that all men, Jews as well as Gentiles, are under sin, and justly condemned to suffer the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men;—that such is the nature and extent of the requirements of the divine law, that man, in his fallen, depraved and condemned state, can never make amends for the wrongs he has done—can never atone for the offences which he has committed against the righteous government of God, or restore himself to the divine favor. It is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Therefore, man, having once sinned and

fallen from the divine favor, can never be justified by the deeds of the law, in the sight of God. He is condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on him. This chain of reasoning, and this conclusion, so clearly arrived at, prepared the way for a statement and illustration of the great doctrine of the gospel, justification by faith, and salvation by grace, through the blood of Jesus, the atoning Saviour.

My brethren, I have lately spoken of man—of his powers, his capacities and susceptibilities—and of the high rank which his Creator has given him in the scale of being. In that discourse, some allusion was made to the depravity of the human family. It was, however, but an allusion, made for the purpose of illustrating an important doctrine then under consideration. The doctrine of the universal sinfulness and guilt of man, is one of such importance as to demand more than a passing allusion. It deserves particular and solemn attention. We should make it the subject of serious thought and prayerful consideration, till in our own souls, we feel its humbling influence, and have become prepared to appreciate and receive the grace of God which bringeth salvation to the guilty and perishing. To this subject, therefore, I would now invite your attention, and O may God give his own truth enlightening and convincing power, and cause it to work ultimate salvation in each of us!

Our text asserts that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. This declaration includes the whole human family—Gentiles as well as Jews—Pagans as well as nominal Christians. Its import is, that humanity, every where, the world over, from first to last, is guilty before God, and has come short of apprehend-

ing, enjoying and extending the glory of God, according to the original design of the Creator. This, among those who profess to believe the Bible, will doubtless be conceded. By such, it cannot be denied. But this concession is not enough; a heartfelt conviction of it is entirerely essential, in order to a true and saving faith. How can men sue for mercy, and receive Christ as their Savior, when they have no conviction of sin and just condemnation? And what is it to sin? It is to transgress, the law of God; it is to violate the righteous obligation which he has imposed upon us; it is to leave undone what we ought to do, and to do what we ought not to do.

It is true, my brethren, that the means for acquiring a knowledge of the divine will—of duty to God and his creatures, to whom we are related, are not the same, over the world. Those who live in countries where the Bible and the institutions of divine worship are enjoyed, are highly exalted. To them, God has revealed himself, and his will, and his claims, in the plainest language. Of his character and claims, of their duty to him and to their fellow beings, they cannot, therefore, remain ignorant, without incurring a high degree of criminality. But of the Pagan world we cannot thus speak. There, no written revelation of God and his will has shed its light upon man's pathway through time: there, no pure and holy services of divine worship, regularly call men away from the cares and pursuits of this short life, and direct their minds to the great Author of being and fountain of blessedness: there, no law, written by the finger of God, or pen guided by his unerring Spirit, tells man his duty to his Maker and to his fellow-man. What, then, can we look for there, but the most confused notions of right and

wrong? Such *is* the state of things in all Pagan countries. And yet, even the heathen are not wholly beyond the limits of obligation to God; for they are not wholly without witness of God and his goodness. When the men of Iconium were about to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas—thus paying them divine homage—they rushed out to prevent the act: "Sirs," said they, "why do ye these things? We also are *men* of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." There are methods, therefore, in which God manifests himself, even to the people of Pagan nations. Not a morning rises upon them—not an evening throws its curtains around them—not a shower falls upon their fields—not an autumn cheers them with its precious fruits, but bears witness to them of Him who gave them being, and who still upholds and blesses them, and, in a manner, presses upon them divine claims. Thus, "the invisible things of Jehovah, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." Therefore, they ought to know God and love him; and as they are undeniably the offspring of the same common Parent—the creatures of the same glorious Creator, and pensioners upon the same never-failing divine bounty, they ought to love one another. Failing to do this, they sin, and are guilty before God.

Thus, my brethren, it is plain that God has not left

himself without witness in any land, among any people. To those who have the Bible and the ordinances of divine service, he speaks in plain language, declaring his own being and eternal perfections, and proclaiming his own sovereign and righteous will. Where the Bible is not given, he manifests himself in his own works, and presses his righteous claims, in the increasing bounties of his hand. Hence, whatever difference there may be in the degrees of men's guilt, in consideration of the difference in the measure of their light—which difference, in the decisions of the great day of final accounts will be fully considered;—all men who know not, who love not, who obey not God, are guilty of sin, and without excuse.

In confirmation of this solemn and alarming conclusion, I urge one fact. It is, that a sense of guilt and condemnation is universal among men. Suppose we pass over Pagan lands—what mean the bloody altars, the painful pilgrimages, the costly and painful religious observances, the acts of self-torture, met almost every where? The answer is plain: a sense of guilt is every where felt, and these acts are resorted to as an expiation of sin. They speak, therefore, in a solemn and convincing manner, in confirmation of the doctrine of our text. They furnish strong proof that *all have sinned*. And although we do not see the same attempt to expiate sin in those lands where the Bible has shed its light, yet we meet with evidence not less clear and convincing. Hence, we hear from the lips of the truly pious, over all the land, the language of humble, penitent confession. In what Christian temple do we not hear the confession, in one form or another, "we have erred and strayed from thy ways, we have left undone

those things which we ought to have done, and have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." With the true Christian, the universality of human sinfulness and guilt is acknowledged, not from the power of evidence addressed to his understanding from without. He is human himself; he knows what humanity is; he knows its relation to God, and he knows by bitter experience that it is under the plague and curse of sin. From his heart the prayer is often, nay constantly poured forth, "God be merciful to *me a sinner*." Thus the word of God finds a response in the heart of every one who truly knows himself.

These confessions, so sincerely and so constantly made before the eternal throne, by Christians, are not to be taken as evidence that they are by nature or by practice more depraved and more wicked than other men; for on the whole, they are not so. They are the effect of a more perfect knowledge of human nature in themselves. And although, in their own deep self-abasement, they may be cautious in their judgments of others, yet they know that no man can truly see himself and not feel the pangs of conviction, and confess himself lost, and exposed to the righteous sentence of eternal condemnation.

But I remark, once more, that a sense of guilt is prevalent among the unrenewed, who do not heartily join in the confessions of Christian worship. Common as are the remarks, "I intend no wrong; I aim to do the thing that is right, in all my intercourse and dealings with men"—still, their consciences are ill at ease. Many a cup of pleasure, when put to their lips, is found dashed with a mingling of bitterness, of the source of

which they may not be fully aware. Where can the human being be found, who, amidst the pursuits of this present life, has a soul perfectly at rest? Certainly not among those who continue in the state of nature. On the contrary, as we pass from place to place, we are sure to meet, here one of sullen look, whose breath is spent in complaints against his fellow creatures, not one of whom, in his estimation, is right; there another, whose countenance bespeaks a mind disturbed within. In a word, whatever of cheerfulness and apparent happiness we may sometimes witness in social circles, where minds are taken up with passing scenes, there are none, from whom the sigh of inward disquietude does not, at some times, escape. It is when alone, and in a manner constrained to commune with themselves, and contemplate their high and most solemn relations, and their future destiny, that men become impressed, and feel that all is not well with them. Now why all this? Is all this disquietude and repining the result of stern, uncontrollable fate? Is man doomed, by absolute decree, in spite of himself, to spend his life in such a manner? It cannot be. God has not left himself without witness, full, and clear, and convincing, that his designs with respect to our race, are kind, and benevolent in the highest degree. He does not, he cannot delight in the sighs, the distress, the anguish of his creatures upon earth. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The source of man's wretchedness and repinings, then, must be sought elsewhere. And, my brethren, let me solemnly assure you that it is not far away. Nay, it is in man himself. Thus has the high and lofty One spoken, saying, "There is no peace to the wicked. He is like

the troubled sea, that cannot rest." Man is a sinner; and therefore he cannot rest. Sin has cut him off from the favor of Him, whose smile is the sunshine, the power, the life of the soul. Sin reigns in him, and has reduced his moral nature to a state of degradation and wretchedness. Sin is working death in him—is hurrying him on to the death which never dies! How then can it be otherwise than that he should be the subject of trouble and disquietude. I here repeat, what, in substance, was said in a former discourse. Man was made to a high and noble end; he was made to know, and love, and serve God forever. In knowing, loving and serving him, God designed that he should be perfectly blessed forever more. But man has cut himself off from the favor and enjoyment of his glorious Creator by sin. Nor can he ever be truly happy and at rest in his soul, till in some way restored to the divine favor. In this respect, therefore, as sinners, all men have come short of the glory of God. They do not perceive his glory, and rejoice in it, because their minds are blinded by sin. They do not, as sinners, show forth his glory to the universe; for sin has spread a dark cloud over this part of the dominions of the Almighty Ruler of the universe. Nor, continuing in sin, can he ever rise to view the eternally unfolding glory of God, as it shall be seen and rejoiced in by all holy beings in heaven! No: man's sin, if not removed, must doom him at last to the inconceivable horrors of outer darkness—the blackness of darkness forever. O what a fearful doom! Who can seriously contemplate it unmoved?

And now, my beloved hearers, what have you to say to the declaration of the text which I have attempted to illustrate in your hearing? Dare you frankly con-

fess to the charge, that you have sinned and come short of the glory of God? Do you feel that you are condemned, and justly, as sinners against your Maker, and rightful Lord and Sovereign? To this charge, fearful as it is, all must, at some time, plead guilty. If not now, under the expostulations and pleadings of mercy, it must be in that solemn day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ; when the secrets of every heart shall be laid open before an assembled universe.

And is it thus, my brethren? Have we all sinned and come short of the glory of God? Have we given offence to our Maker, and Preserver, and Benefactor? Have we incurred the righteous displeasure of the Lord most high? O then, with what concern should we contemplate the solemn fact! With what humility and sorrow of heart, and self-abasement, should we come before him, pleading for mercy! And should we not do it now? Can we be willing to continue another day —another hour—under the guilt and fearful condemnation of sin against Him, in whom we live and move and have our being? Can we longer resist his most righteous claims upon us? Now, even now, may the Spirit of grace touch our hearts, and inspire us with true penitence for all our sins, and turn us effectually to God! O God, thou seest our misery and helplessness. Speak thou to the heart. Give each a heart that grieves for having offended thee.—AMEN.

SERMON V.

EXCEEDING CRIMINALITY OF SIN.

ROMANS VII. 13.

Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid: But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful.

The apostle, in this connexion, was illustrating some important operations of divine truth upon the human heart, by a reference to his own experience. Once, he was living with no distressing sense of his own sinfulness, or fear of the divine displeasure. But his attention had been turned to the divine law. That law had been brought home to his heart and conscience by a divine energy, in its exceeding extent, and purity, and spirituality. In the light which thus shone upon his life, and upon his moral nature, he was powerfully convinced of sin, and of the deep depravity of his nature. And now his hopes failed him, and in the bitterness of his soul, he exclaimed, "I am carnal—sold under sin"—"O wretched man that I am, who shall

deliver me from the body of this death !"—"I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Nor could this deeply convicted and alarmed Pharisee find deliverance from any creature source. So depraved and lost did he find himself, that the good by which he would have recovered himself from the condemnation and ruin in which he was involved, he could not do; the evil from which he would have escaped, in spite of every purpose and resolution of his own, still followed him. Such was his experience, under the convincing power of the law, brought home by the power of the Divine Spirit.

Here the apostle, anticipating an objection which might arise in the minds of some, against the goodness, the benevolence of the Lord, says, "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid: But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good, that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful." The law, which is holy, and just, and good—which is benevolent in all its designs, does not injure me; it only discovers to me my real misery. It discovers to me my sin, which is working death in me. It makes apparent the exceeding sinfulness of my sin, and thus drives me from my false hopes, to seek refuge elsewhere. And, my brethren, it is not difficult for the experienced Christian to see the correctness of all this. Where is the Christian who has truly learned Christ, who has not at least a measure of fellowship with the apostle in this law-work in his experience? Where is the Christian who has not found the law a school-master to bring him to Christ?

But there is one phrase in our text, to the import of

which I would more particularly call the attention of the congregation this morning: "That sin, by the commandment, might become *exceeding sinful*."

On a late occasion, I endeavored to establish the humbling fact of the universal sinfulness of man. This point is often conceded, while there is, apparently, no just sense of the evil of sin. Men confess, that, with all others, they are sinners, and yet manifest no concern that they are so, and have no impressions of the condemnation which rests upon them as such. This insensibility is an alarming feature in their case, and to remove it—to awaken men to a sense of their depravity, their guilt and danger, is one important end at which the Christian minister should aim. This I desire to do on the present occasion, by calling your attention to the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And O may the Spirit of truth, whose peculiar office it is to convince of sin, be with us in his convincing power, as we proceed in the contemplation of the subject before us.

Something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin may be seen in the following considerations:

I. Sin is a war against a being of infinite excellence and dignity;—it is a war against Jehovah.

The wickedness of an offence committed against man, is often estimated by the standing and responsibility of him against whom it is committed. An offence committed against a private individual in the humbler walks of life, is wrong, and cannot but bring upon its author the censure of the good and the virtuous who may witness it. And yet, should the offence be committed against some one occupying an important and responsible station, and representing the community

around him—whose interests are confided to his care, it would be regarded, by all, as vastly more aggravating. In this case, not one individual alone is aimed at by the wrong;—the interests, not of one person alone, are affected: but the wrong reaches all whose interests are confided with the one in authority. What, then, my brethren, must be the turpitude, the exceeding aggravation, of sin committed against God? He is at the head of the universe: there is not a world to which he has not given being; there is not a creature who is not indebted to him for existence, and for all that renders existence desirable;—there is not a living being in the universe who is not momentarily upheld by his all-pervading power; there is not a blessing enjoyed which is not conferred by him. He is "God over all, blessed forever more." His name is "excellent in all the earth," and his glory is "set above the heavens." He is the "King of kings and Lord of lords." He dwells in light unapproachable by mortal eye. He is surrounded by an effulgence of glory, upon which no mere mortal can look and live. Upon his will is suspended the happiness of countless millions of beings. And is it against this exalted and glorious Being that we have sinned? It is even so. Alas, we have all, thoughtlessly, or madly and presumptuously, lifted up the puny arm of creature rebellion! It is against Him who is worthy of, and who justly claims, our reverence, our supreme love and our constant devotion, that our hearts have risen up in enmity. What then must be our guilt?—what, the exceeding aggravation of our sin? As God is great, and good, and glorious, our sins against him must be red like crimson —must be of a scarlet dye—must be of damning aggra-

vation. So they have often been viewed by men, when God has set their sins in order before them. Men have suffered from various causes. Some descriptions of human suffering, springing from various causes, cannot be contemplated but with horror. But of all that men have ever experienced of physical pain or mental anguish, nothing can compare with the anguish which sometimes has been experienced under a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as committed against the holy and righteous Lord of the universe. Under such a sense of his sin, and of the divine displeasure, a young man of cultivated mind, of naturally strong intellect, once said to his friend, while his countenance bespoke more than his words, "The English language does not furnish terms sufficiently strong to express a thousandth part of what in my soul I suffer in this moment." My impenitent friends, you may not see it now; but such is your case. You stand convicted of sin against God. Your sin is a war against that vast, and wise, and benevolent moral government which he has established, and which he is maintaining for the glory of his own name, and for the good of his creatures. In this position, you are exposed to the fearful retributions of divine wrath. Think of this, my hearers; think of your state as a sinner; think of the exceeding sinfulness of your sin, and delay not to humble yourself before your Maker, in view of your guilt, while yet the door of mercy is open to you.

II. The exceeding sinfulness of sin may be seen, in a more particular consideration of the punishment threatened against the sinner.

The penalty of sin is death. All that is fearful in

sickness and death to man's physical nature, has been entailed upon the race by sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;—and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." What an inconceivable amount of suffering and woe has been experienced from age to age, since the entrance of sin into the world, to the present time, amid dying scenes! Think of the scenes of the room where death is doing his fearful work. Remember, too, that not a moment passes in which these scenes are not, somewhere, witnessed—in which the pains of death are not, somewhere, experienced! Why all this amount of suffering among the creatures of God? Why is man doomed to languish, and suffer, and die? It is the work of sin? The sting of death is sin. What then shall we think and say of sin? Verily, it must be an evil of fearful magnitude in the sight of God, and of all holy beings.

But this is not all of the penalty of sin. The wages of sin is death eternal. This is evident from the language of the apostle Paul. He puts the wages of sin, and the free gift of God, in contrast: "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord." If, then, the gift bestowed upon those who receive the gospel, is *eternal life*, certainly, without that gift man sinks in eternal death.

And what is the import of that fearful phrase, death eternal, as applied to the final state of the sinner dying in his sins? This may be gathered from the various passages of the holy scriptures. From these it appears that the second death, the consummation of the fearful penalty of sin, will consist, first, in the final and perpetual exclusion of the sinner from the favor and glory

of God. Those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And this, let every one understand, amounts to a declaration that the characters contemplated shall be excluded from every source of enjoyment. There is no source of enjoyment to creatures, for which they are not indebted to God. It is from the Lord of life and glory, that every good, and every perfect gift comes down. To be destroyed from his presence and from the glory of his power, therefore, is to be cut off from all which flows from him to bless his creatures. Hence those who fall under the ultimate penalty of the divine law, and become a prey to the second death, though existing still, must wander through the gloom of outer darkness forever, beyond any possible access to any source of enjoyment.

"O wretched state of deep despair,
To see my God remove,
And fix my doleful station, where
I must not taste his love."

Where, from all the felicity flowing to creatures in the countless streams of divine love, I must be forever separated! O, this would be a death of deaths!

But it will consist, secondly, in suffering a dreadful sense of the divine displeasure. What else can be the import of those passages in which the wicked are spoken of as suffering divine wrath? The *wrath* of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. When a class of individuals were seen flocking to John for instruction and baptism, he said unto them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the *wrath to come?*" &c. And

again, while those who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, shall receive eternal life, to every soul that doeth evil, whether Jew or Gentile, is reserved "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath." From these passages, as well as from others of similar import, it is plain that in that state of hopeless exclusion from the presence of God and from the glory of his power, the sinner, finally lost, must feel, forever, the fearful displeasure of the holy Sovereign of the universe. That will be suffering surpassing description. Some idea may be formed of it, from various expressions and figures employed to represent it, by the inspired writers. Our Lord, speaking of it, represents the lost as "weeping and gnashing their teeth"—"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The apostle speaks of some, to whom is reserved "the blackness of darkness forever." And St. John, the divine, saw from the region of the second death, "the smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever." These representations, fearful as they are, are not exaggerations. No false and over-wrought view of the woe that awaits the incorrigibly wicked is here presented. These are representations of the God of truth, made to warn the sinner of his coming doom, and influence him to flee, while he may, *from the wrath to come!*

Such, then, my brethren, is the penalty of sin. Here then, where, in the light of God's word, we may see the certain wages of sin, let us learn its exceeding sinfulness. Here let our minds become impressed with the truth, that God cannot look upon sin, or him who knowingly and wilfully commits it, with any allowance or approbation. And O may we all learn to dread sin, as

the greatest of evils, and shun it, as of all things most destructive to our peace and to all our dearest and most enduring interests.

III. The exceeding sinfulness—the exceeding evil of sin, may be further seen, when we consider the provision which infinite mercy and wisdom found necessary, to effect the salvation of men from its final consequences.

In the Bible, we are taught that while sin is infinitely evil in the sight of God, and the sinner an object of the divine displeasure, divine mercy was moved in behalf of fallen, sinful man; that in the exercise of mercy, God sought to save him, and bring him again within the divine favor. To effect this great end, however, no compromise of the dignity of the divine government must be made—no lenity must be shown to sin. The law, in all its demands, must be satisfied, and a suitable demonstration of the divine displeasure toward sin must be made. The moral sense of a holy universe, the good of moral beings throughout that universe, required this—nothing less than this. But how could this be done, and yet the sinner be spared? How could the pleadings of mercy be granted, and the demands of stern justice be satisfied? This was a question which creature wisdom could never have answered. But, everlasting thanks to God, wisdom divine discovered and revealed a way for the accomplishment of the great work. And, in view of it, well may we exclaim, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" O the amazing depth of divine love! In its deep and mighty movings

toward guilty and perishing man, the most precious object which ever came within its infinite compass, was given for his rescue and salvation. It is a truth worthy of a place in every sermon, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here then, my brethren, is the provision of divine mercy and wisdom for the salvation of man from sin and its consequences. In the nature of the case, no created being, however holy in nature or exalted in rank, could by any offering or sacrifice in his power, give satisfaction to justice in man's behalf, such is the relation which every created being sustains to God, that the constant and full consecration of his whole being to Him and his glory, is no more than his duty. He cannot, therefore, take the place of any delinquent. He can discharge the obligations of no others, to God. So far as we can see, therefore, there was no other alternative. Either the Deity must appear among men—must take the place of man under the law, and satisfy its demands in his behalf, or man must perish under its curse. But, thanks, everlasting thanks to God, that he did not abandon us to merited wrath. "He spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." Gave him up to assume our nature, and appear on earth, God with man;—gave him up to a life of toil and sorrow;—gave him up to meet and endure hatred and scorn from men;—gave him up to the overwhelming anguish and bloody sweat of the garden;—gave him up to the ignominy, the dying pangs of the cross, for us. All this, my brethren, was necessary for our salvation from sin and its everlasting consequences. No being less exalted, no

sacrifice less precious, no sufferings less appalling, could have availed for us. What then shall we say of sin? Think of the only begotten Son of God, to whom is given a name above every name, a sojourner among men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Think of him, oppressed, often to sighs and tears,—think of him, sorrowful in soul even unto death;—think of him prostrate on the earth, under the untold anguish of his soul, sweating as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;—think of him bleeding upon the cross;—think of him, under the hidings of the Father's countenance in that dreadful hour, exclaiming, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Think of him as he bows his head and gives up the ghost;—think of the instantaneous convulsions of universal nature, and of the pall of darkness in which the world is clothed;—and, think again, that all this is for the expiation of man's sin—that nothing short of all this could have saved the sinner from eternal woe, and then say, is not sin exceedingly sinful? Is it not damning in its nature? But, with a few words, I close.

My brethren, we are all sinners. By nature we are under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God abideth upon us. O solemn, humbling, alarming truth! Well may we tremble under a conviction of it. And can we be indifferent to it? Is all that has now passed before as nothing to us? Blind, indeed, our minds must be, and hard indeed our hearts, if we can remain unmoved by the considerations to which our attention has now been directed. Nothing should alarm us more than this very insensibility. It is a fearful token that sin is working our final and everlasting ruin. O God, in mercy impress us all with a sense of the sinfulness of sin, and constrain us now to seek mercy!—AMEN.

SERMON VI.

GOD IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD. &c.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 19.

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

It was not said of the apostles of our blessed Lord, nor of the great body of those who embraced the gospel under their ministry, that there was no difference between them and other men. There was a difference, which the world around them saw, and felt, and of which much was said. They spoke of new hopes: pressed on with an energy and zeal unequalled, in a new and singular course of life, rejoicing amid the most serious trials and bitter persecutions. They seemed prompted by motives, to the world strange and unaccountable, and were in a manner incapable of being influenced by the motives which governed other men. In a word, all fellowship between them and the unbelieving world around them, was broken off. "What fellowship hath light with darkness! What communion hath he that believeth, with an infidel." These excla-

mations, were not, then, without plain and solemn import. These strong peculiarities of the followers of Christ, to the unbelieving around them were wrapped in deep mystery. To them, Christians seemed totally regardless of all the pleasures and comforts of this life. They seemed to glory in self-denial, in crosses, in wearisome toils. Verily, thought the world, these men are beside themselves. They are blinded, maddened, by their new and strange superstition.

This mystery, in our text and context is explained. God had shined in their hearts, and given them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and henceforth, enchanted by the view, they were fully absorbed in the prospect of eternal life and blessedness in his presence above. No earthly pleasures—no worldly glory could so enchant them as to turn them aside from the ardent pursuit of that high end. Through faith in the Lord Jesus, they had become the happy partakers of divine love—of the divine nature. In that love, sweetly, powerfully shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, they were unspeakably blessed, and by it they were powerfully constrained to holiness of life—to unceasing devotion to the cause of God in the world, and to indefatigable exertions for the diffusion of the gospel among men every where. "For whether we be beside ourselves," said Paul, "it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge: that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." Here then, my brethren, is the reason why, in a manner, the

apostles and other disciples knew no man after the flesh—why, with them, old things had passed away and all things become new—why they themselves, in their own consciousness, in the sight of men and before God, had become new creatures. All was of God, who had reconciled them unto himself by Christ Jesus. They stood forth before the world, as the workmanship of God through the Spirit—as bearing testimony, both in word and in deed, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; but freely forgiving them, through faith in the blood of his only begotten Son.

Thus was the mystery of the wonderful change, and the singular course of life, which distinguished the apostles and other Christians of their day, explained; and yet it remained a mystery still, except to those whose hearts the Lord opened to perceive the truth as it is in Jesus. And O may the Spirit of grace rest upon us, while we consider this subject somewhat more at length, and cause us to understand the mysteries of true godliness—of life and salvation through the cross of Christ the Son of God.

I. The first point which claims our attention is the state of the world. It is unreconciled to God.

That this sentiment is taught in the Bible, must be conceded by all who are at all acquainted with that blessed book. But the teachings of the Bible upon this subject will be unavailing, unless man can be brought to look to the workings of his own heart and think upon his own ways. Whoever has done this has been constrained to confess the truth of the most humbling teachings of the book of God, with

respect to the state of his own heart. He has been constrained to confess himself the depraved and guilty rebel against God, so fully described and so fearfully condemned in the divine word.

And, my brethren, is there no evidence on the face of society, that the world is unreconciled to God? Should a son totally disregard the wishes, the reasonable requirements of his father, and pursue a course of life opposed to the known wishes and directions of that father, could he give stronger evidence of unreconciliation to him? I know what must be your answer. Such a course would prove him perverse, and totally opposed to one whom he is bound to respect, and love, and obey. And how does the case stand between man and God? What God is to man, is manifest to all who live within the light of his word. He is our Father, our protector, and our benefactor. Little as we may have thought of it, we have lived the objects of his care, the subjects of a thousand blessings of his hand from day to day, from hour to hour. Rightly has he claimed it of us, to love him with all our hearts, and employ our time and all our powers in obedience to his will. But who, I ask, of all the family of fallen man, unrenewed by the grace of God, has ever done this? Not one. "As it is written, they are all gone out of the way."

And my hearers, can you claim that you love and serve God according to the extent and spirit of the divine requirement? Such a claim is too preposterous. Not one of you presume to maintain it. Thus then the sentiment of the text must be conceded. Man, the whole world of mankind, by nature, is unreconciled to God.

But upon this point I remark once more. The spirit of murmuring against God, is universal. Scarcely had the children of Israel commenced their journey toward the promised land, before they began to murmur against their high and mighty deliverer. All the wonders which had been wrought in Egypt in their behalf, and for their deliverance from cruel bondage, were soon forgotten, and every little difficulty and inconvenience which met them in their way, was an offence to them. Their complainings were almost constant. Thus they provoked the Lord to anger. In the history of that people, during that memorable journey, we have a striking exhibition of human nature, in circumstances the most favorable which can well be supposed, for calling forth love and confidence toward God. And yet, what do we see in this history but the spirit of controversy with God. In a manner, God journeyed with them, in the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. On each morning, his hand was opened to give them bread, and when it was necessary, he supplied them with drink by a miracle. And yet the sweet emotions of gratitude and love were never kindled in their hearts. They lusted and complained, and complained and lusted. Such is human nature everywhere. And, my brethren, is it not thus within our own observation? Surely, God has not left himself without witness among us, in that he has done good, and given us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And yet, amidst all this profusion of blessings, do we hear the language of love, and gratitude, and praise to God, the great and glorious Author of all our blessings? Nay; but O how common, how everywhere prevalent, is the language of complaint and dissatisfac-

tion! How few there are, even where the gospel has shed its light, and sent abroad its renovating power, who know the blessedness of holy trust and confidence in God, who know the blessed tranquility of perfect acquiescence with the divine will! Verily, with the history of past ages before us—with the testimony of man which comes to us from every quarter of the world, —from every tribe of the human family, and with the aspect of human society all around us, in our mind's eye we must confess that we are in heart unreconciled, opposed to God.

And here the inquiry naturally presents itself, What must be the end of our controversy with God? Of one thing we may all be perfectly certain: man cannot successfully contend against God. In consideration of the provisions of divine grace, man may be spared long; yet at the last, the rebel creature must sink under the just though long delayed inflictions of divine power. Man may strive with man, and for a time it may be questionable which will prevail; but in the strife of man with his Maker, there can be no such uncertainty. Omnipotence and eternal justice must overcome at last, and then "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!" The end of this strife, therefore, must be the utter and hopeless ruin of the rebel. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God."

But let us pass to notice—

II. The divine plan for reconciling man to God.

Here, my brethren, we are met by a remarkable, a truly wonderful declaration. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The mystery involved in this phrase, has been a subject of great interest, of

earnest inquiry and of joyful wonder, to the angels in heaven. "Which things, the angels desire to look into." To unfold the unsearchable depths of this mystery, is not within the power of any creature. Its glory, to those who truly embrace it, will be forever telling, and yet remain untold. And yet, as the traveller, who would seek a home in some foreign land, of lovely scenery, of healthful air, and flowing in a rich profusion of blessings, launches out upon the bosom of the ocean, though unable to comprehend its vastness, or fathom its hidden depth, or tell one of a thousand of all its wonders;—so the humble believer, trusting in God, whose ways are unsearchable and whose judgments are past finding out, ventures his all for eternity upon this mystery of godliness. True, he is unable to comprehend the mysterious union here expressed—God in Christ, &c.—and yet he embraces the truth, rests upon it, and rejoices in it—nay, more—will be saved by it.

But, my brethren, although we cannot fully comprehend the truth under consideration, we can perceive the occasion for its interposition and its adaptation to our necessity.

We have seen that man is fallen, depraved, degenerate, in all his moral feelings averse to his Maker and Lord—that he is involved, consequently, in guilt, and justly exposed to the wrath of God. It is plain, therefore, that some satisfaction must be rendered for man's sin, and that his moral nature must be renewed, in order to his reconciliation with God. And how could this be effected? This was a question which none but the councils of infinite wisdom could answer. But, blessed be God, infinite wisdom has found out the way, and the reconciliation of man to his offended

Maker and Sovereign is now possible. "God so loved the world that he gave up his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God, in the person of the Son, came down from heaven, took upon him our nature, sin excepted, and was thus made under the law. In that nature, he fulfilled the law, and, in the end, suffered for the sins of men, bearing them in his own body on the tree. He gave himself a ransom for all. "He tasted death for every man." He shed his blood for the remission of sins. Now "he is the propitiation for our sins." This, my brethren is the great truth, which, in the simplicity of faith, we are to receive. And through faith in this wonderful expedient, God can be just, and yet justify, or pardon, the believer. Thus God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, "not imputing their trespases unto them."

And again, Christ, having allied himself to us, by the assumption of our nature—having suffered for our sins upon the cross, and thus given satisfaction to the demands of public justice, and having ascended to heaven after his resurrection from the dead, has shed forth upon the world, in the plenitude of divine power, the Holy Spirit, whose province it is, in a manner beyond our comprehension, to enlighten, draw, renew and sanctify the souls of men.

Our Lord, speaking of the Holy Spirit, said, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.... He will guide you into all truth.....He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you." It is through this inward illumination, this work of the Holy Spirit in men, that they come to perceive and

appreciate, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and feel its renewing efficacy. Hence the apostle, speaking of the seeming change which he and other Christians had experienced, said, "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Now where this work of the Holy Spirit is done in the heart, "the old man is crucified"; the body of sin is slain, and the new man in Christ Jesus, created by the power of the eternal Spirit, in righteousness and true holiness, begins to live, and pant for the fuller knowledge of God, and for the bliss of full and everlasting communion with him. Now, through the power of renewing grace, he that was dead in trespasses and sins, is alive in Christ, who came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Now, he that was carnal—sold under sin, whose very nature was enmity against God, in Christ is reconciled to God—is inspired with the spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father—is filled with joy in the divine favor. O happy state! O what condescension of divine love! O the wonders of redemption by blood divine! May God open its glory upon each of your souls, and shine in your hearts to give you "the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ," and so save you with an everlasting salvation, for Jesus sake!

I notice briefly—

III. The instrumentality employed to bring the fallen and guilty into a state of reconciliation with God.

"And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Here is the great instrumentality; it is *the*

word of reconciliation. This word embraces the great system of revealed religion. Here is revealed, the being and perfections of God—the creation of man—his relations, to his Maker—his fall, depravity and condemnation to death—God's designs of mercy toward the fallen race—his wonderful proceedings in prosecution of those designs—the incarnation of his Son, his spotless life, his divine teachings, his passion, resurrection, ascension to the mediatorial throne, and his intercession there in behalf of those for whom he died—the coming of the Holy Spirit, his work upon the hearts of men, producing conviction of sin, repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and conducting them through all the stages of a progressive sanctification, till they shall at length be made perfectly "meet for an inheritance among the saints in light."

Now, however unlikely it may seem to many, that the statement, illustration and application of these great doctrines should ever produce, under God, a radical change in the moral nature of man, subduing the enmity of his heart, and inspiring him with love to God—it has been done in millions of cases. Often has the attention of men been arrested, and fixed upon the truths of our holy religion. Upon them they have been, in a manner, constrained to think, till they have become the subjects of pungent conviction of sin—till, broken in heart, in view of sin, they have fallen before the throne of the Lord most high, in penitent prayer. Nor has this been all. Soon, upon their humbled souls the gospel has poured its cheering light. In that light, they have seen God in Christ, reconciling man to himself; while in their own hearts, they have felt the workings of a living faith, by which they have received Christ

as their own Saviour. Henceforth, in the language of the apostle, they have had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, whatever others may say or think, they are perfectly conscious of the influence of truth in bringing about the blessed change. Of nothing are they more conscious. To this end it is, that we preach. To this important and blessed end it is, that the gospel, the word of reconciliation, is committed unto us.

In conclusion, I would inquire, my brethren, To what end is it that the gospel is preached to you? Why are the great truths which have now been under contemplation, reiterated in your hearing from Sabbath to Sabbath. To what end do you listen to them? Is it simply to furnish you a stated intellectual entertainment? Do you come and listen to your chosen minister, simply for the sake of passing pleasure? O no, this is not the end for which the gospel is preached to you. It is because you are involved in the guilt of sin—because you are exposed to the condemnation and ruin of rebellion against God, it is that you may feel the power of truth in your hearts—that it may work repentance in you, and that you may be blessed, every one of you, in being turned away from your iniquities, and that so you may be saved from wrath, and be raised to an inheritance of bliss and glory among the saints in light. O then, I beseech you, keep this end in view. Think of the condescension of divine love. Think of what God, in the plenitude of his mercy and grace, has done for you. Think of what he is now doing for you, and all that you may be saved. And when you hear the gospel, hear it as those whose salvation is sought by it. Lift up your hearts in humble, earnest prayer,

that it may not be in vain that you are permitted to hear it—that it may not be in you a savor of death unto death. O, my brethren—it is with affection I speak it,—if, after having so long listened to the gospel, you remain impenitent, and die without having yielded your hearts to its humbling, renewing and saving power, yours must be a fearful doom in eternity. And of all this you are in danger. God has borne long with you. Soon you may have heard your last sermon. Soon your account may be sealed up to the great day. Soon, if you continue to neglect heaven's offer of mercy through the blood of the Lamb, it may be forever to late to improve it. Soon you may be compelled to exclaim, in the bitterness of never-ending remorse, "Lost, lost, forever lost!"

"Haste, O sinner, to be wise;
Stay not for the morrow's sun:
Wisdom, if you still despise,
Harder is it to be won."

"Haste, and mercy now implore;
Stay not for the morrow's Sun,
Lest thy season shonld be o'er,
Ere this evening's stage is run."

SERMON VII.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

ACTS XX. 21.

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul was about taking his last leave of the elders of the Ephesian church. It was suitable, that on giving them his parting counsels and exhortations, he should allude to his own ministry among them. His was an example which might be safely followed. "Ye know," said he, "from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying, both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Such was his ministry there—a ministry which he might review with high satisfaction, whether contemplating the motives under which he had

performed it, or the results which had been produced by it. It was a ministry not in vain, but owned and highly honored of God in the salvation of men.

It is plainly manifest, my brethren, with what high satisfaction the apostle declared, in every place, the *great truth* of the gospel, namely, the gift of Christ for the salvation of lost men. The cross, the cross—Christ and him crucified! This was a theme which never lost its power to warm his heart into holy fervor, and in publishing and illustrating which, he counted it a privilege to spend his days. The more he contemplated the great truth, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten, &c., the more completely did it fill his soul with admiration and joyful wonder—the stronger was his own hope of eternal life through that amazing provision, and the more ready he felt to make any sacrifice within his power to proclaim the wonderful, the glorious truth for the salvation of other men. This the whole course of his ministry fully attests.

But, my friends, the proclamation of this great truth imposed high and solemn obligations upon those who heard it. Suppose the apostle to appear before a congregation for the first time—a congregation upon whose ears the wonderful truth had never fallen—before whose mental vision a Savior crucified for the sins of men had never been presented; suppose that before such a congregation, the apostle, with the tenderness of the inspiration of divine love, proclaims the great truth of God's saving love, assuring them of the provisions of the gospel for their return to the divine favor—for their eternal salvation:—who can doubt, that on such a congregation, a new, and solemn and weighty obligation would be imposed? That obligation, my hearers, what-

ever it may be, rests upon you. It has long rested upon you—ever since you first heard the great truth—ever since you first heard of God's unspeakable gift to perishing man. What that obligation is, our text declares: it is to exercise *repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Suppose a son to have broken away from the kind restraints and regulations of the best of parental government; suppose that parent, with the heart-yearnings of a good and kind father in such a case, should seek to bring that son back to his favor—that in order to do this he should resort to some most expensive expedient—should employ some one of distinguished standing and character to act as mediator. Now in such a case, doubtless, the son, certainly in the wrong, and guilty of aggravating ingratitude, is under obligation to return to his injured father with sorrow and confession, from the first moment of his wrong. And yet, it is plain that the course of the father, as it opens the way for his return, and furnishes assurance of a gracious reception, imposes a new obligation to do so—an obligation which cannot be resisted, without incurring vastly augmented guilt.

Now in the case of man with his Maker, the interposition of the Mediator was indispensable. But for the mediation of Jesus Christ—God with us—no place for repentance, for return to God, with right feelings, had been found. It is testified of Christ, that "he is exalted at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Again, just before he ascended up to heaven, our Lord himself, addressing his disciples, said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise

from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached *in his name* among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It is certain that these interesting passages connect repentance with the atonement and mediation of the Lord Jesus.

By that atonement and mediation, two things entirely essential to man's return to God are effected. First, a way is opened for man's return. The holiness of God, the honor and dignity of his government, and the well-being of countless millions of holy intelligences, subject to that government and owing their happiness to its maintenance, forbade that the sinner should be received without suitable satisfaction being given to public justice. That satisfaction man could not give. The violated law pronounced him cursed, and cursed he must have remained, shut out from the divine favor forever, had not a ransom been found in vicarious sufferings—the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Lamb of God. In his sufferings—in the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, where he "who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"—the divine law, and public justice, find full satisfaction. And through this mysterious interposition, this wonderful expedient, man—poor, guilty, outcast, perishing man—may return to his Maker, with hope, with strong assurance of a gracious acceptance.

Secondly, through this gracious interposition of the Son of God, the Spirit of grace is given to incline men to repent.

It is a humbling truth, that the heart of man, by nature, is "enmity against God." In it there is no right feeling toward him----not the least inclination to return

to him. In the language of the divine word, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." No; we have all turned aside to our own way. The way of peace we know not; on the contrary, destruction and misery are in our way, and our steps take hold on death. Hence it is that such vast numbers, who live in the midst of gospel privileges---- who are surrounded by so many influences calculated to lead them to consider and acknowledge the claims of God and yield to them, remain impenitent. They are the slaves of sin; they yield themselves up to the dominion of their own depravity.

Now to meet this dark circumstance in our case, Christ has made provision, by sending the Holy Spirit into the world. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to reprove the world of sin, &c.----to subdue the obduracy of the heart, and tenderly incline it toward the Lord. Have you never seen the man of strong mind, of strong sense, brought to a stand and rendered solemn by a contemplation of religious truth? Have you never seen him become deeply impressed with a conviction of his sins, and of his consequent condemnation?---and have you never seen him become like a child in tenderness and weeping, and in the simplicity of his inquiries after the way of salvation? All this, thanks be unto God, I have seen many times. At all this, the world has wondered, and for it they have been unable to account. But let the world know, that all this is the effect of no human influence or power. It is the work of the Spirit of grace upon his heart. It is a state of mind and heart which never would have been experienced or witnessed among men, but for the provisions of the gospel—but for the mediation of Christ, who is

"exalted at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

It was in view of all this that the apostle, while he published to all classes of men the amazing love of God to a perishing world, at the same time "Testified, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." He clearly stated and explained to them the nature of true repentance, and of faith—assured them of the provision made for their exercise, through the atonement of Christ, and solemnly exhorted and entreated them to embrace the proffered grace—to repent and believe the gospel.

With all this, my hearers, we are deeply concerned. We are related to God, as were the men of the apostolic age. We are, like them, depraved, and under condemnation. Like them, left to ourselves, our case must be hopeless. But, thanks be unto God, the door of repentance and faith, which was opened to them, is open to us. And upon us rests the same strong obligation to embrace the proffered grace, and turn to God in the exercise of *repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Yes, my hearers, with the knowledge which we have of the gospel, we are solemnly bound, *in this moment*, to turn to God with penitent hearts, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and every moment's resistance of that obligation, adds to our already fearfully accumulated guilt. O that the Spirit of grace would set this truth home upon the heart of each one present! It is *now*, that the gospel door is open—*now* that the Spirit graciously inclines, and *now*, that the Father waits to

receive the returning prodigal, for his Son's sake. And can you again turn away from that door? O, my hearers, that door may soon be shut against you forever.

But, should the attention of any one be so far aroused to this subject, that he feels a desire springing up within him to turn to God in the exercise of true repentance, and by faith in the Lord Jesus, it may be important to such an inquirer, briefly to consider the nature of that repentance and faith. This is the more important, as at this point many have erred, it is feared, to the ruin of their souls. Many, doubtless, have experienced the most poignant regrets for having spent their lives in sin, when forced to see and contemplate coming consequences. With many bitter lamentations, they have wished that it was in their power to recall their crimes. Under these feelings, they have prayed for mercy. And is not all this true repentance toward God? It certainly is not. All this may be felt, where there is no regard for the character and authority of the Governor of the Universe, and no grief for having offended him. All springs from an apprehension of the consequences of sin, and not from a deep sense of its nature, as being at war with the greatest and best of beings. In this it is defective. It has nothing in it that is evangelical. In it, although the soul, alarmed, may cry for mercy, the heart does not, with the grief of holy affection, turn to God.

Now I suppose that true evangelical repentance comprehends the following particulars:—a sense of the justness and goodness of the divine law; a cordial approval of all its requirements; a deep and humbling sense of wrong in having violated that law; a decided

disapproval of sin, and desire to be freed from it for its own odiousness' sake, and an earnest turning of the heart to God, with melting sorrow for having so long and so unreasonably offended him. Such is true repentance. It is repentance toward God. It acknowledges him to be holy, and just, and good. It grieves for having offended him. It turns to him with holy sorrow for the past, and humble, earnest desire for the future. It renounces sin, with abhorrence, as supremely odious, and greets holiness, as lovely and supremely desirable. Happy is the man whose heart is in such a state. He is sure of a gracious acceptance with God, to whom with sorrow and desire he turns for mercy.

In such repentance, incredible as it may seem to the unexperienced in divine things, there is a kind of pleasure. Yes, the cup of godly sorrow for sin is strangely mingled with sweetness. The true penitent loves to weep over his sins. He feels a relief in presenting before the gracious eye of his Maker and Sovereign

> "A heart, with grief oppressed,
> For having grieved his God."

And yet, in order to be a partaker of the fullness of Christian joy in the assurance of pardon, he must exercise faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. A distinguished Christian minister, who has now gone to his eternal rest, has bequeathed to the world a clear illustration of this important point, in the record of his own experience. After many and painful mental struggles, he became the subject of a conscious change within. He saw the justice of God's holy law. His heart was melted in sorrow at the view of his own numberless transgressions of that law. He felt within, a spirit of submission to God, though as yet he had no assured

hope of a gracious acceptance with him—no assured hope of his own salvation. From his inmost soul he approved the law, though it condemned him. He saw, moreover, a brightness, a glory in the gospel of Christ, and felt his heart won by its sweetly conquering power, though as yet he did not dare to hope for a participation in its provisions—its wonderful grace. What was all this but repentance, the crucifixion of self, a letting fall the weapons of rebellion against God? And what more, you will ask, was necessary in his case. Just what, to the permanent joy of his soul, he soon realized—an appropriating faith, a faith by which he received the Lord Jesus as his own Saviour—in the exercise of which, he saw that Christ died for him, and by which he could adopt the language of the apostle: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Now the scales had fallen from his eyes. Now he saw that God could be just, and yet the justifier of his own soul, through faith in Christ. Now he felt at peace with God through his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and knew the spirit of adoption in his heart, crying Abba, Father. Now he could sing:

"My God is reconciled—
His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me as his child,
I can no longer fear:
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba, Father, cry."

Thus, in him was united repentance toward God, with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In all this you may see what is requisite in you. Nothing short of this will bring you into peace with God, and insure your eternal salvation.

This repentance and faith are elements of the Chris-

tian's daily experience. The Christian heart is always a penitent, believing heart. While he lives by faith on the Son of God, a broken, penitent heart is the most precious offering which he can present to the eye of his forgiving Lord, through the whole of his life below. It is proper, therefore, that the prayers and the sacred songs of the Christian congregation should abound in the language of penitence and humble confidence. And into these sacred offerings of the house of God we should strive to enter with all our hearts. With such sacrifices God is well pleased, and in the midst of the congregation offering them, he will not fail to be present by the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, sweetly melting the hearts of the penitent and devout into holy fellowship and love, and inspiring them with hope and joy.

And now, my brethren, having attempted to show you the provision which God has made for your repentance and faith, and having endeavored to explain to you the nature of true faith and repentance, I would, in conclusion, press the question, Have you embraced the proffered grace? Are you in the daily exercise of repentance toward God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? I would press this important question upon the consideration of those of you who have made a public profession of the Christian religion. You cannot too carefully try your state. "Examine yourselves," said an apostle, "whether you be in the faith." Amid the multiplied cares, and business, and pleasures of the present life, we are in danger of losing sight of our spiritual state, and suffering our spiritual exercises to decline. Hence the importance of constant watchfulness and self-examination. Not a day should be

suffered to pass over us without such examination—without a careful watchfulness over the state of our hearts. I have said, that repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are elements of the true Christian's daily experience. Are they, my brethren, elements of your own daily experience? Do you daily approach the throne of mercy with a heart broken and contrite in view of sin? Do you daily feel within, a cleaving to the Lord Jesus as your only Saviour? Do you, as often as you enter the public congregation of the saints, in heart devoutly join in the public confessions of sin which are there presented in prayer, and often in the sacred song? With nothing short of this should you be satisfied;—with nothing short of this should you regard yourselves as safe. Mere profession, and formal worship, in which the heart is not engaged, is no evidence of salvation is only offensive in the sight of God. O may the Lord assist us by his Spirit, truly to know our real state, and keep us in the exercise of every Christian grace, till perfectly matured for the holy and blissful worship of the sanctuary above.

But some, who hear me now, do not profess to have repented of sin, or in faith to have embraced Christ as their Saviour. To you, my friends, the subject before us is one of great and solemn concern. That you are sinners in the sight of God, you cannot, you will not deny. In your present state, you are exposed, fearfully exposed, to the wrath of God. Upon you that wrath must fall, and it may be soon, except you turn to God in the exercise of repentance. Before you I have attempted to place the provision which God in infinite mercy has made for your return. For you, Christ has sojourned on earth, a man of sorrows and acquainted

wjth grief; for your instruction and guidance, he has taught the way of life, in language and by figures plain and easy to be understood; for you he has laid down his life upon the cross; for you he now intercedes before the throne in heaven. But for all this, your repentance, and pardon, and salvation, would have been impossible.

In view of all this you may return and find mercy, may repent and be saved. Can you contemplate all this unmoved? Can you pass from this place—from hearing these solemn truths—with no solemn reflection, with no desire to improve the grace so freely proffered, with no desire to repent and turn to your offended Sovereign? Thus you cannot do without incurring fearful guilt. It would be to slight him who came from heaven and bled for you; for it is his call you hear to-day. That call, slighted alittle longer—how little none can tell—you may never hear it more. Against you the door may be shut. Then, alas, your doom will be fixed forever! Then, alas, under the accumulated guilt of the sins of which you will not now repent, you must sink in hopeless despair! O turn, turn to-day, with penitent hearts, through Christ, to your offended God. To this may God, by his Spirit, powerfully incline you.—Amen.

SERMON VIII.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS.

COLOSSIANS I. 13.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

In this text, the apostle speaks of that mysterious moral change, in which men, by nature children of wrath, become children of God, and heirs to an inheritance of bliss and glory in heaven. This great change has been effected in every true Christian. He has been delivered from a power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Once under the dominion of spiritual darkness, a child of wrath and an heir to immortal misery, he has now become a child of God, and an heir with Christ to an eternal inheritance in glory.

The references to this important and happy change, in the writings of the apostles and other early Christians, are numerous and clear. This shows with what interest and feeling they regarded it. It was contemplated as the beginning of their real peace, the com-

mencement of their spiritual life, their starting point in the highway of holiness, leading to eternal joys in the presence of God. They loved to dwell upon it, in their epistles and in their conversation, speaking of it in language of warmest gratitude to him by whose gracious power it was effected.

And, my brethren, why should not Christians of this day do the same? With equal propriety may we, who know the blessed change,—who have experienced the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," cherish with emotions of warmest gratitude the memory of so great a salvation. It is well for us often to call to mind the state in which we once lived, to contemplate the beginning of the work of grace in our hearts, the peace that pervaded our spirits, the joy that sprung up in our hearts, when the power of spiritual darkness was broken, and the light of life dawned upon our souls. It was then that the power of hell was overcome in us. Then the reign of grace unto eternal life commenced in our souls. O, can we ever forget the time? Can we ever cease to speak of the grace that was then manifested unto us. Gracious Saviour, forbid it! O let our hearts never cease to burn with love, and rise with warmest gratitude for what was then done for us!

But, my brethren, let us, on the present occasion, contemplate the power of darkness, the deliverance of the Christian from that power, and his subsequent condition in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

I. Let us contemplate the import of the phrase, "the power of darkness."

This phrase was used by the apostle, to express the

blindness of men in a state of nature, to spiritual things. Not more blind to all that is beautiful, or grand, or sublime in nature around us, is he whose eyes have been sealed from his birth, than are those whose minds are blinded by sin, to all that is beautiful, and lovely, and glorious, in the revelations of divine grace. This blindness of men to spiritual things is strongly asserted in many places in the holy scriptures. Said an apostle, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Again, speaking of the Gentiles, he said, "Walk not, as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." This darkness of the understanding, and alienation from the life of God through ignorance, and blindness of heart, once reigned in us all. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work." "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." All around and above us, bears the plainest impress of the divine hand, and speaks the existence and glory of the Creator of all, the Lord Jehovah. And yet, under the glories of that heaven—amid all the wonders of surrounding creation—through all the manifestations of successive day and night, we once lived without the knowledge of God, with no solemn and profound impressions of his being and all-pervading presence. Were not our understandings wrapped in the grossest darkness? Was there not then a fearful darkness upon our hearts? Again, in the Bible, God has spoken to men, asserting his

claims upon them, and clearly illustrating the ground of those claims. In this blessed book, he has plainly defined the duties arising out of every relation of man, and enjoined the implicit and unceasing performance of them, denouncing a just penalty against every disobedient soul. And yet, with the Bible in our possession, and its teachings ever passing before us, we once lived with an extremely imperfect knowledge of duty, constantly violating the plainest precepts of the divine law, and for the most part, with no painful sense of guilt or apprehension of the wrath threatened against transgressors. Could we have lived thus, had not the deepest moral and spiritual darkness reigned in our hearts?

And yet once more: In his word, God has revealed a system of salvation for our guilty and perishing race —a system in which all the divine attributes gloriously harmonize to effect the salvation of men from sin, and from the utter and everlasting ruin to which it has exposed them. In that system, God has manifested his love to men, by the gift of "his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here, the Son of God, having taken upon him the seed of Abraham, is seen among men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. At the close of a suffering life, during which he had filled many a sorrowful heart with joy and gladness by deeds of mercy, he is seen in the agonies of an ignominious death, though in truth convicted of no sin. His death was for the sins of men. He died, that we might be delivered from deserved death, and live in heaven forever. Following the inspired narative farther on, we see him alive again, among his disciples, in whose sigh

he ascended in a cloud to heaven. There he now liveth, Mediator between God and man, making intercession for us. Thus exalted at the right hand of God, he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. In view of all this, my brethren, we are assured that our salvation is possible. In view of all this, we are addressed from on high in language of most tender invitation and moving expostulation. And yet, with all this before us, and often sounding in our ears, we once lived the slaves of sin, strangers to spiritual peace, "having no hope, and without God in the world." Could we, in such circumstances, have lived thus, had not our understandings been grossly darkened. and our hearts under a power of darkness?

Thus darkened in understanding, and alienated from the life of God, and blind of heart, thousands are now living. Have you all, my brethren, have you seen the heavenly light? Do you see God in his works? Are your minds solemnly and permanently impressed with a conviction of his presence and holiness? Do you, under such light and with such impressions, feel yourselves bound to love and serve him by a perpetual obligation? Do you see, in the light of the gospel, the highway of holiness leading from the banishment of hell to the city of God above? Yielding yourselves unreservedly to God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, do you rejoice in hope of the glory of God? If not, then is the power of spiritual darkness yet upon you. As the man whose natural eyes have been closed from his birth upon the light of the sun, and upon all the glories of creation walks in the midst of objects which inspire the beholder with thrilling emotion, unmoved by pleasure or pain, so are you passing on through time,

unmoved by those spiritual perceptions, which in the minds of renewed men have excited the deepest emotions of concern or joy. All around you are things, of which you have no proper knowledge, of which you have no true perception, whose importance to you surpasses all expression. Such darkness is fearful!

But, farther: The apostle speaks of the *power* of darkness, as though men were held in darkness by a power from which their own unaided exertions cannot deliver them. It is even so. There is a power of darkness upon unrenewed men, of which they are, except awakened by divine power, altogether insensible. What this power is, is manifest to the Christian, who has properly considered the workings of his own mind and heart. It is, in one view of it, depravity. Human depravity is alienation from the life of God. It is deep-rooted aversion to truth, to holiness, to God. It is enmity against God. Why, since light shines on every hand of us, do not men perceive it, and improve it, and rejoice in it? The reason is plainly given by our Lord: "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Light shone around Felix, under the preaching of Paul. It began to make some impression upon his dark heart. He trembled, as it was poured upon him, and why did he not receive it in its fulness, and henceforth rejoice in the light of life? The reason is plain. He was alienated from the life of God in the affections of his heart. In his moral nature there was nothing sympathizing with holiness. Under the promptings of that nature, he was doing evil. In doing evil, his nature was gratified. To his evil, and ultimately ruinous course of life, he was in a manner propelled by the

full force of his affections. Hence, the light which made manifest his sins, and the end to which they were hurrying him, was, for the present at least, resisted. He "hated the light, neither would he come to it, lest his deeds should be reproved." In all this we may clearly see where lies the *power* of darkness. How often, my brethren, do men shrink from the searching, sin-exposing and condemning truths of the gospel, with an instinctive dread, as they would shrink from the pointed steel! How often, turning from those truths, do they seek refuge in various systems of error—many, alas, to the ruin of their souls!

Before leaving this part of our subject, one point more demands our notice. It is the power exerted upon the minds of men by Satan, who is styled "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,"—"the God of this world," who hath "blinded the minds of them that believe not." With the plain teachings of the Bible upon this subject before him, no one can doubt that this fallen being exerts a dreadful power upon the minds of men. Numerous and subtle are his devices, to prevent them from coming to the light of truth. Multitudes, bewildered by his subtle insinuations, have turned away in discouragement or disgust, from the teachings of the gospel, and abandoned themselves to the influence of fatal delusion. In this way, what hopes have been disappointed! What moral ruin has been effected.

Now, of all this Christians are more or less sensible. You, my Christian brethren, can well remember the dread you once felt of the searching power of truth. You can well remember how difficult it was, when you began to think seriously of your eternal interests, to

gain a clear perception of divine things. The more you thought, and the deeper your anxiety, the darker all appeared. You felt, it may be, as the heathen did, when, after listening to his Christian teacher, who was striving to make him see the way of life through Christ, he shook his head in discouragement, exclaiming, "Me mind dark." Such discouragement is a thousand thousand times felt, in seasons of revival. And what is all this but the power of darkness! In such darkness the whole world by nature lies. Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people. In this miserable state, what multitudes are passing their lives, every day approaching the horrors of outer darkness, the blackness of darkness forever, the miseries of an eternal night in hell!

II. We will pass to consider the deliverance which the Christian has experienced from the power of darkness.

In speaking of his own deliverance, and that of his brethren, the apostle evidently refers to an internal, a moral change, of which he and other Christians were perfectly conscious. His language is clear and strong: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." This language plainly expresses an inward renovation, in which man's natural aversion to truth, and holiness, and God, is overcome and removed. It is not, as we have seen before, because no light shines, that men walk in darkness, and, in the end, stumble into perdition; for light does shine

around all :—"The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." And again, said our Lord, "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The great difficulty is in men. It is in the deep depravity of the human heart, its total alienation from the life of God, its all-pervading enmity against God and true holiness. Now, to overcome this, to change the tone of moral feeling, and produce a cordial yielding of the heart to the influence of saving truth, is a work which no creature power can ever effect: it can be effected only by the almighty energy of the Spirit of God. Said Paul, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus explicitly was the great work ascribed to God.

I will not, my brethren, attempt to describe the manner of the Holy Spirit's operation in renewing the human heart;—to do so, would be to pass beyond the bounds of revealed truth. It would be attempting what our blessed Lord, in the plenitude of his instructions, did not attempt. He only illustrated it by a beautiful reference to the passing wind. "The wind," said he, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." So we, fully conscious of the change which we have experienced, thankfully acknowledge what great things God hath done for us,—tracing the different states of mind through which we have passed; but can by no means describe the man-

ner of the Spirit's operation. We can only say—and blessed be God that we can say so much !—"Whereas we were blind, we now see." Yes; having been delivered from the power of darkness, the eyes of our understandings having been enlightened, we see evidence of the being, perfections and all-pervading presence of God on every hand. We see the reasonableness and equity of all his requirements, and the unreableness, the wrong of our sins against him. We see the justness of all his threatenings against the guilty. We see in the gospel, the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, and feel them, through amazing mercy, working salvation in our own souls. We see, by the power of living faith, our exalted and glorified Saviour on the right hand of God, dispensing blessings to his people here, and welcoming them as they come to the end of their earthly pilgrimage, to seats in glory. We see the everlasting, blessed home of the saints in the presence of God, where

> "Glories shine, and pleasures roll,
> That charm, delight, transport the soul.
> And every longing wish shall be
> Possess'd of boundless bliss in Thee."

And we see—O blessed view !—an open way, through the sacrifice and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to that world, for our own souls. No longer is the religion of Jesus darkness to our souls: it is light, and in that light we rejoice, sometimes, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We now have fellowship with the saints, in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

III. Let us contemplate the Christian in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

This is a revolted world. Over all its face, the Spirit of rebellion reigns. Satan, the prince of the power of the air, bears fearful sway. To such an extent does he contend, that he was called by our Lord, "the Prince of this world." Said he, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

Into this world the Son of God came, to raise up a kingdom that should be to the praise and to the glory of God in the sight of the whole universe. This kingdom has been commenced, and is now progressing towards its final and glorious consummation. But where shall we look for it? Shall we find it exclusively in any one of the numerous forms of church organization? Important as are church organizations and ordinances, in perfecting the saints and extending the knowledge and influence of the gospel in the world, the true idea, lying in this phrase, "The kingdom of God's dear Son," must be sought back of all such organizations. It is the reign of Christ in the hearts of redeemed men. To bring fallen man into this kingdom, more than a change of purpose, more than an external reformation, is requisite. He must be translated, must be renewed in his moral nature, must be created in righteousness and true holiness. When all this is effected in man's heart, he is sweetly, powerful constrained to holy obedience to Christ. In him, every requirement of the King of Zion meets a ready and cheerful response. Henceforth, he obeys because it is in his heart to do so. "The love of Christ," said an apostle, "constraineth us." And are not Christians everywhere sensible of an inward constraining power? Are they not moved by divine love, to devote themselves to him who loved them and gave himself for

them? All this is plainly taught in the holy Scriptures, and clearly apparent in the language of the truly pious, the world over. Here then is the kingdom under contemplation. It is in the heart renewed by grace, and brought under the control of divine love. It is in such hearts, wherever they may be found, and amidst whatever earthly circumstances; and, when the last one of all the countless millions given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, shall have yielded to the renewing power of the gospel, and bowed to the sceptre of divine love; when the great multitude of the redeemed, out of every nation under heaven, perfected in holiness through the blood of the Lamb, shall surround their Redeemer and King in heaven, where heart meets heart, and love mingles with love—where no sound of discord is heard, no feelings clash—where the will of Christ sweetly, fully, controls all, and where his smile of love and delight shall inspire all with perfect bliss;—then will the kingdom of God's dear Son appear in the fulness of its glory.

How truly blessed, my brethren, is every one who has been thus translated; in whose heart the dominion of sin has been broken, and the power of darkness dispersed; in whom the love of Christ reigns, sweetly, powerfully constraining from all that is evil, to all that is lovely and of good report! He lives in the enjoyment of present inward peace, to the world unknown. "Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Thus wrote the psalmist, while an apostle responds: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." His is a condition of spiritual safety. He is embraced in the love of Christ. That love reigns in

him, moving him in paths of holiness, and filling him with divine comfort. Over him the Lord of life and glory watches with a constant care. Who shall be able to separate him from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or persecution, or distress? Nay; in all these he shall be more than conqueror through Christ, out of whose hand none is able to pluck him. Before him are the most cheering prospects. He is merged in, and identified with that kingdom whose progress and consummation in glory is secured by infinite wisdom and power. Kingdoms of the earth may rise and fall, till they shall all be numbered with the things that were; but the kingdom of our Lord shall rise, and extend and endure forever, to bless its subjects.

My brethren, is this our condition? Have we been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Are we united in interest and love, with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, and in whose hearts his reign of love is established? And are we to participate in all the glory and blessedness of his everlasting reign in heaven? O then, from us what gratitude and devotion are due! Surely, all we have, all we are, should be devoted to the promotion of his glory in the earth. Here, in this consecrated place, while the subject is before us, and the Spirit of grace is overshadowing us, let us renew the consecration of ourselves to him "who loved us and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

In closing this discourse, I would turn to you, my friends, who do not know, in your own experience, the blessed change of which I have spoken. The reality

of this change, the necessity for it, few if any of you doubt. Living, as you do, where the light of the gospel is enjoyed, and waiting regularly on the means of grace, you are ready to avow your belief in the great truths of our holy religion. And yet it is a melancholy fact, that you have not found it in your hearts to give your attention to those truths as concerning your prospects for eternity. Why do you pass them by? Why are you so reluctant to contemplate them in their bearing upon your dearest, your everlasting interests? Can you assign to yourselves any other reason than the depravity of your hearts? I can think of no other. This is the misery of your case. While the door of mercy, of escape from the wrath to come, is open before you, and you are invited in a thousand ways to enter it, you have no heart to do it. You are enslaved by sin. The power of darkness is upon you. You are allured along in the paths of sin by Satan and the strong inclinations of your unrenewed hearts. And have you never feared that you might venture too far in this course? Think not that your case will be bettered by delay. Do not flatter yourselves that you will ever enjoy circumstances more favorable. Instead of this, your depravity will become more inveterate, and your guilt more aggravated, and your prospects for eternity more dark, with every hour's delay. You will never become Christians; you will never know the blessedness of the reign of Christ in the heart, and of a good hope, through grace, of eternal life, without resisting the devil and your depraved inclinations. Continuing to yield to them, your ruin is certain. Stop, then, where you are. Dare to face the truth, and lay your heart open to its most searching light. Be willing, now, to see your

spiritual condition as it is. True, should you do thus, you may be alarmed and humbled; for your salvation can be effected only by a work within you which can be effected by no creature power. At the mercy of God you lie. His power alone, through the mediation of Christ, can work in you that moral renovation which will make you "meet for an inheritance among the saints in light." Look, then, I beseech you, to him. Before his throne confess your guilt, your helplessness, and cast yourselves, just as you are, upon his mercy. This do truly, and you shall never perish. The invitations and gracious assurances of his word, all encourage you to this course. And now, who will decide to turn to God to-day? In this congregation, is there a single heart yielding to the claims of the Saviour, to the calls of mercy? On that heart the eye of divine compassion is fixed, and we will hope that this day will add another to the number "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." The Lord bless his word! —AMEN.

SERMON IX.

CHRISTIANS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

JOHN XVII. 16.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

THESE words are found in the prayer offered by our Lord, in the presence of his disciples just before he was betrayed. It was offered for them, and for all who should believe on him through their word. It expresses a sentiment worthy of consideration by every one professing to be a disciple of Christ. It is, that Christians are not of this world. This sentiment is expressed in strong language: "They are not of the world, *even as I am not of the world.*" Contemplating the life and conversation of our blessed Lord upon earth, how manifest it is that he was not of the world. He was of another world. He was from the spirit world. Said he, "I came down from heaven—I came forth from God." His spirit, his manner of life, the whole body of his teachings, were calculated to impress the people with the belief that he was in this world on an errand of love and mercy from heaven, whither he was soon

to return. He spoke as one who had come from the presence of the Father, and from the society of angels. His appearance, his conversation, were heavenly. His works were divine. The design of his mission upon earth, was plainly declared on various occasions during his ministry among men. It was the salvation of men. He came that men through him might have life. He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In those who received him, this great work was accomplished. It has been accomplished in all who have received him in every age since; and it will be accomplished in all who shall receive him to the end of time. Said the apostle John, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This important change was, still is, and ever shall be effected through the belief, the cordial reception of the truth. "I have given unto them," said the Saviour, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." But why were the disciples hated by the world? Plainly, because of the change which Christ's teachings had effected in their moral natures. Through the power of his word in their hearts, they had become partakers of Christ's holy nature, had become new creatures, had become sons of God and heirs to an

inheritance in glory. By virtue of this moral change, they were cut off from fellowship with the spirit of rebellion, universally prevalent in this fallen world. It was for this that they were hated by the world.

And my brethren, the same may be said of the true disciples of our Saviour, now living on the earth. Having received the words spoken by him—having received him as come from God, they are sons of God, "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They are partakers of the divine nature, through Christ, and, in an important sense, are no longer of the world. By their new nature, their hearts are raised to heaven in their most earnest longings, where, ultimately, they will dwell forever—

> "Their every longing satisfied,
> With full salvation blest."

Whether, therefore, it is properly appreciated, or not, there is a real and exceedingly important distinction between Christians and other men—a distinction which must finally separate them by a distance, wide as is the home of the holy in heaven from the abodes of the lost in hell. This distinction, in the great day of final investigations and eternal decisions, will be perfectly apparent to all.

A clear perception of the prominent points of distinction between the Christian and the unrenewed, is of most serious importance to all. For one to fancy himself a Christian, and dream that all is well for eternity, when in truth he is of the world, pursuing its poisoned pleasures, and sympathizing in its spirit, is the most fearful deception into which man was ever betrayed. From such deception and its fatal consequences, may God mercifully preserve us!

Anxious for your spiritual safety, your eternal salvation, my brethren, I will now attempt to state and illustrate some particulars in which the Christian is distinguished from the world. And O thou gracious Saviour, who knowest our weakness, and the dulness of our perceptions, shine into our hearts from on high, and by thy Spirit guide us into the truth, and through the truth, bring us truly to know thee and the power of thy saving grace!

I would here remark, that Christians are not distinguished from other men by any thing peculiar in their outward circumstances. While they live in the world, they are subject to the same physical wants as others. Of necessity, therefore, they must mingle in the business transactions of this life. Often their worldly interests are identified with those of other men. And in general, the same vicissitudes of fortune happen to both classes. Some are poor in this world's goods, whilst others are rich. Some pass through life in almost uninterrupted prosperity, whilst others are subject to numerous trials and afflictions. We are not, therefore, to look upon those who wade through the deepest waters of affliction in this life, as objects of heaven's peculiar displeasure, nor upon the most prosperous, as the peculiar favorites of the great Dispenser of good. All these differences are regulated by him who causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, in view of reasons beyond the scope of our mental vision.

The marks by which the Christian is distinguished from the world, are in the heart, the source of moral feeling and action. There they are seen by the eye of God, who knoweth them that are his; and there they are perceived by the Christian himself, assuring him

beyond a doubt, that he has passed from death unto life. They are these:

I. Divine Love.

Said an apostle, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Said another, "Whoso keepeth his commandments, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." Now, into the heart of every Christian, God has shined, and given him the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Henceforth, in his clear though still limited perception of the divine perfections, his heart rises to God in holy love. He can sympathize with the inspired writers in their warm and glowing expressions of love and adoration: "The chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Yes, my brethren, to the Christian, God is the being of supreme love. In the universe, there is no other who so engages and absorbs the affections of his heart. He is the fountain of his felicity. To dwell in his presence, and behold his glory, and enjoy his smile—this, nothing short of this, will consummate his bliss. Said one of old, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."

In this, we see the reason why Christians experience such high satisfaction in reading the holy scriptures. In them God speaks, and they know his voice. In them, they behold as in a glass the glory of God, and as they contemplate these manifestations of his glory, their own hearts are brought under the influence of his holy mind, and inspired with emotions of love and divine

joy. For the same reason, moreover, they delight in secret prayer, and in the public services of divine worship. In these services, God is wont to draw near to his people, and manifest himself to them as he does not to the world. Under these divine manifestations, the world recedes from the Christian's view, while his faith waxes strong, and his soul rises into the life of God. In the midst of such scenes of communion with the God he loves, he can sing,

> "Gladly, the toys of earth I leave,—
> Wealth, pleasure, fame,—for thee alone;
> To thee my will, soul, flesh, I give:
> O take, O seal them as thine own."

Now, in this respect, how manifest it is that the Christian is not of the world. In the love of God, he lives a life unknown to the world. In God he enjoys what the world cannot give, what it cannot take from him. With joy unspeakable, he draws water out of the wells of salvation. In all this, the world has no sympathy or fellowship with him; nor can he sympathize with the world in the pleasures of sin.

Here let us pause and inquire, Is this true of us? Have we been born of God? Has the love of God been shed abroad in our hearts? Is the hidden life of God in us? Does Christ live in us. Are we conscious of the deep and strong movings of divine love in our hearts, turning us from the pleasures of sin, and influencing us to seek our joy in God? Blessed, thrice blessed, is every one of whom this is all true. He is not of this world. He is of God, and will surely see God in peace and everlasting joy.

II. The Christian is distinguished from the world in the spirit of his intercourse with men.

A distinguished Christian writer has said, "Selfishness, in fallen man, is the succedaneum to that love to God and man which the law requires." The truth of this statement is fully apparent on the face of human society. Except so far as the gospel has exerted an influence to change the moral feelings of men, self-interest and self-gratification seem to control the conduct of men, the world over. This is apparent in the clashing, and envy, and contention so common among men. It was with reference to it, that the apostle uttered that striking description of the heathen, "Hateful, and hating one another." But, my brethren, where the gospel is received, and the heart yielded to its transforming power, it effects the destruction of human selfishness, supplanting it by a pure and heavenly benevolence. In the language of the apostle, "The old man is crucified," while the new man is put on, after God, "created in righteousness and true holiness."

In the preceding part of this discourse, I have spoken of the love of God, as shed abroad in the hearts of renewed men, by the Holy Ghost. By this, they are affected, not in their relation to God, only, but also in their relations to their fellow-men. Henceforth, they are new creatures with respect to God, and also with respect to men. While, in love they are devoted, self-devoted to the glory of God, they are also, in the exercise of universal good will, devoted to the well-being of their brethren of the human family. Good will becomes the governing principle, in all their intercourse with the various classes of men with whom they may be associated, or who may be within the reach of their influence.

Do any ask for evidence of the truth of the forego-

ing sentiments, I would refer them not to the teachings of the scriptures only, but also, to the manifest influence of a pure Christianity upon the dearest interests of men in every age and in every land where such a Christianity has prevailed. What, I ask, could have prompted the apostles of our Lord to their self-denying course of life, their unwearied toils for the diffusion of the knowledge of the gospel among men, often in the midst of the bitterest persecution, if it was not the desire to promote their good? It is certain that no worldly inducements, no hope of gain or worldly glory, could have influenced them to such a course. They knew that reproach, and bonds, and afflictions awaited them, in consequence of their devotion to the work of the ministry. It was holy love that prompted them,—the same love, in kind, that brought the Saviour from heaven into the world. This the apostle asserted: "The love of Christ constraineth us." Yes, it was the deep and constant working of this love, that moved and sustained them in all their toils and sufferings for the souls of men. Under its promptings, what perils they encountered, what toils they endured! What persecutions they suffered! And, in all this, what earnest affection did they breathe toward men of every class?

In the labors of those holy men, multitudes were made to rejoice. In their moral feelings and condition they were elevated, and qualified for enjoyments purer and more exalted than they had ever known or imagined before. Those who were enemies before, were made friends, were united by the most endearing of all ties, were made one in Christ, and contributors to each other's joy. All this is evident, from the testimony of their enemies, even.

But we need not look back so far for evidence of the benevolence of the gospel, and of its spirit in the hearts of Christians. It is seen now, in the striking contrast, everywhere apparent between Pagan tribes, and the people of those lands where the religion of the Cross prevails. In Pagan lands every where, selfishness, and distrust, and revenge, reign predominant in the hearts of the people; but where the gospel prevails, a different spirit is diffused. So far as its influence is felt, confidence and love between man and man, are sure to follow. To this, the most ample testimony is given by those who have visited our missionary stations. They have seen and admired the influence of Christianity upon those who but lately were shrouded in the gloom of Pagan darkness and superstition. They have seen, as true faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ has sprung up in the heathen heart, the rise and growth of those social virtues, in the exercise of which man is blest in man. Marked and striking is the distinction between them, and the dark masses around them. There it is seen and felt, that the Christian is not of the world. Respecting the bearing of Christian missions upon the point under consideration, I would make one remark more. In various Pagan lands, we have numerous well established missions, with men devoted exclusively to the preaching of the gospel. The influence of these missions is extending more and more widely with every revolving year. To what, I ask, shall we trace these missions, and the blessings which follow in their train? Do men devoted to the world, originate, and at great expense, prosecute such enterprises? Never. Such enterprises are not of the world. They are originated not in the spirit of the world. They have

their origin in another and very different spirit. They have their origin in Christian benevolence. They can originate in no other spirit. Here, my brethren, is proof that the same love which gave the Saviour to the world, exists and is active in the hearts of men; that there are Christian men on the earth, who, having been born of God, and made partakers of the divine nature, are elevated above the spirit of selfishness which prevails in fallen man; who live, not for themselves alone, but for others, and who rejoice in doing good, as they have opportunity, unto all men.

Here again, my brethren, let us bring the question home to our own hearts. Is this descriptive of our state? Does this spirit of heavenly benevolence reign in our hearts? Do we breathe the spirit of good will towards all men? In the exercise of it, are we striving as opportunity is presented, to promote the happiness, the present and eternal well-being of men everywhere? Do we rejoice in the spread of the gospel, and in the multiplication of converts to Christ, more than in any worldly prosperity? Do we count it blessed to give of what God is giving us, to diffuse the blessings of the gospel over all the world? This is the Christian spirit. Where this spirit is not, there is not the spirit of Christ.

III. Christians are distinguished from the world by their personal hopes.

Where there is in the mind a conception of some future good, united with a desire to possess it, and an expectation of securing it, there is hope. Assured hope, therefore, is a source of satisfaction to those who exercise it. Indeed, no small proportion of the enjoyment

of men is derived from this source. Where is the bosom that is not at some times cheered by hope? Is there one in this congregation, who is not looking forth to something future, which is to increase, if not complete his happiness? Probably not one. All are living in hope. But there is a wide difference in the hopes cherished by different persons. The hopes of men of the world are confined to the things of time. Worldly gain, earthly distinction, or some favorable change in their temporal circumstances, are the objects of their hopes. All that they hope for, all that they seek, is on this side of death. Nothing of all can be enjoyed beyond this short life. For their future existence they have no clearly defined and stable hope. But with the Christian, it is not so. He has a hope of immortality and eternal life. In the scriptures, God has revealed a heaven to the eye of Christian faith. There he dwells in the effulgence of his uncreated glory. There, beneath his benignant smile, legions of angels are perfectly blessed in his favor and loving kindness; there, no strife, no jealousy or hatred are known, but love, in all the fullness of its blessedness, reigns uninterrupted; there no sorrow or anguish is felt; there no sickness is experienced, no tears are shed, no sighs are heaved; there, is fullness of joy forevermore; there legions of voices cease not to speak the praise of God and the Lamb in songs of perfect harmony;—in a word, there, every wish and every capacity of holy beings is perfectly satisfied forever. Of all this, the Christian has a spiritual perception. Through the power of a living, divine faith, all is real to him. His faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Renewed in spirit, and in a measure made meet for it in the temper

of his mind, he looks to that blessed heaven, with desire, as his future everlasting home; and, assured by the spirit of grace, of his atoning Saviour, he expects to enter there, to go out no more. This, brethren, is the Christian's hope. In grace he stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

But upon this subject I would offer another remark: This hope springs up in the Christian soul, in his regeneration. Such a hope, in the nature of things, cannot exist in an unrenewed heart. In such a heart, there is, there can be, no relish for the society or the employments of heaven. "Blessed," said an apostle, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again, unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." This language cannot well be misunderstood. It certainly teaches, that Christians come into the enjoyment of their blessed hope by the renewing of divine power. It is inwrought. It is identified with their new nature. It cannot be taken from him—it cannot fail him. It is as an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil. It was the sustaining power of this hope that cheered the martyrs of our Lord in the midst of the flames. It is this that has supported and cheered thousands of thousands, as they have passed the Jordan of death. O how different this from the hopes of the world. They shall perish at the giving up of the ghost: but this shall live, and sustain, and cheer the heir of glory, nor

ever fail him, till swallowed up in the full fruition of heaven. O blessed hope! May it be mine! May it be yours, my brethren!

With a few remarks I will close.

1. We see in the light of the subject, that it is a great and solemn thing to be a Christian. It is more than to avow a general belief in the doctrines of Christianity—more than to perform some of the outward and social duties of religion—more than to participate in the outward forms of Christian worship; it is to be "born of God," to be "transformed, by the renewing of our mind," to come into holy communion with God, and with saints—it is to drink into, and become animated by the spirit of divine benevolence; it is to feel it blessed to labor and give for the diffusion of the religion of Jesus, over all the earth; and it is to have our hope in heaven—to be looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the Lord. Who of us, according to this view, are Christians? Beloved brethren, let us look well to this important question. Happy is every one who can discern in himself the marks of true Christianity—who can sing,

> "What sinners value, I resign;
> Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine:
> I shall behold thy blissful face,
> And stand complete in righteousness."

2. We see in the light of the subject under consideration, the importance of immediate attention on the part of the unrenewed, to their spiritual state and prospects.

You cannot, my friends, long remain in this world. However much you may love it; however deeply you may drink into its spirit; however earnestly you may

pursue its pleasures, you must soon leave it. But what will you do in the solemn day, when summoned away from all you love here? For eternity you have no hope. For the communion of the holy in heaven—for the pleasures of that blessed world, you have no preparation. Should death arrest you suddenly, as you now are, you must perish in eternal exclusion from God, and from the glory of his power. That very depravity which now prompts you to neglect God and the offers and claims of the gospel, would sink you in darkness and despair. It is, moreover, a great work which must be effected in you. No resolutions on your part, to lead a different life—no outward reformation within your power, will qualify you for an inheritance among the saints in light. Nothing short of a renovation of your moral nature by divine power can save you. You must become a subject of the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," or perish forever. The truth of all this, you will, you must concede. And can you contemplate it without concern? Can you still delay to look to him, whose mercy alone can reach your case, and save you from impending ruin? Every day's neglect of your spiritual interests, is attended by a most fearful hazard. A single day may fix your doom forever! "Too late, too late!" exclaimed a young man in dying circumstances, as he saw a youthful Christian friend enter his chamber of death. I repeat, nothing but the energy of the eternal Spirit can renew and save you. Turn then to God with all your heart. Prostrate yourself before his throne. There confess your guilt and depravity. There plead, for Jesus' sake, the mercy of God. There seek the pardon and renewing which you need, through

the merits of atoning blood. If you must perish, perish there. But there, with a yielding, penitent heart, you cannot perish.—AMEN.

SERMON X.

TRUE FAITH STANDS IN THE POWER OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS II. 5.

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

THE apostle was speaking of the manner of his preaching among the Corinthians. It was characterized by great plainness and simplicity. He did not seek to charm the people with any flowers of language, or captivate them by the elegancies of a studied oratory. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Cor. ii. 1—4.) His reason for pursuing this course, is assigned in the text—"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

There may be, my brethren, such a thing as faith which stands in the wisdom of men. When men are induced to enter upon the Christian profession, solely through the influence of some distinguished minister of the gospel, upon whose statements and reasonings they depend, without serious and careful investigation on their own part, their faith must be regarded as standing in the wisdom of men. And is it not to be feared, in this day of bustle and speculation, when the great mass of men seem hurried on through life by the power of ever-changing circumstances, that multitudes are confiding thus in men? They believe, it is true: but why do they believe? If called to do so, could they give intelligent reasons for their faith? Many, I fear, could not. And is there not reason to fear that much of the preaching of the present day is calculated to produce a superficial faith in those who hear it? It is certain, that, in many places, the temptation to ministers to seek for literary distinction is powerful. Should they fall in with the temptation; should they allow themselves to be influenced by the desire for such distinction; should they cease to feel the determination of Paul, to know nothing among their people save Jesus Christ and him crucified, the consequences to souls must be evil in the extreme. Our fathers in the ministry were plain men. Many of them were strong men. They were mighty men in the scriptures. And their sermons, if not beautiful, were rich in divine truth. They were sermons which took hold upon the hearts of those who heard them. Their substance, rather than their style, was the theme of conversation among Christians. The effects of such preaching were seen, moreover, in a sound and vigorous faith, and stability of Christian

character, in the churches. Such is the preaching demanded by the purity and stability of the Church and the safety of souls in every age. Human nature is always the same, and so is the truth through which it must be raised from the ruins of sin to the favor of God.

To return to the author of the text, I remark: It was not the praise of men that he sought. It was a nobler and more important end he had in view. It was the establishment of those to whom he preached, in a sound, and vigorous, and saving faith. Any thing else, he studiously and conscientiously avoided. Addressing the saints at Philippi, he said, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that, whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."—(Phil. i. 27.)

It is with a desire, my brethren, to promote in you the exercise of sound faith, and steadfastness in the divine life, that I propose now to call your attention to a consideration of the nature of true faith, as standing in the power of God. And may the Spirit of truth direct us in our meditations, and give us a clear perception of a point so entirely essential to our peace and usefulness, and final salvation.

I. Let us consider the nature of faith.

Faith, in one view of it, is belief. When a father speaks to his child of some object before unknown to him, and the child conceives an idea of it, and believes in its existence, he exercises faith. Thus we are all exercising faith every day.—In another view of it, faith is confidence. Suppose the object, a knowledge of

which is communicated by the father to the child, is an object of desire to him; suppose the father promises it to his child on certain conditions, and that the child confidently expects the fulfilment of the promise;—in this case, again, he exercises faith. Thus, in our social relations and business transactions, we are all constantly exercising faith.—Again, I remark, that faith is often operative. It prompts to action. When the supposed child, with the desired object and the promise in view, strictly performs the stipulated condition, he acts under the influence of faith. Thus we are all doing daily. Such is mere natural faith: its essence, I doubt not, you readily and clearly perceive. This illustration may enable us with greater clearness to contemplate the important subject of religious faith.

Speaking of religious faith, St. Paul said, (Heb. xi. 1,) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This definition of faith is clearly illustrated by reference to various examples of it. Among these examples, the faith of Abraham, who is styled "the father of the faithful," is conspicuous. Said the apostle, (Heb. xi. 8,) "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Now Abraham knew God. His mind was profoundly impressed with a sense of his being and perfections. When therefore God spake to him of a land which he had not seen, its existence was a fact to him.

He no more doubted it than he doubted his own existence. This was faith, and the evidence of things not seen. When God commanded him to leave his country and kindred, and journey to that land, assuring him that he would lead him to it, he obeyed. This was a journey of faith, every step of which evinced his confidence in God. Nor was this all. God had made other promises to him—promises which had respect to the redemption of men through his seed. In those promises another land was seen—a land of which the first was but a type, and in which he, with countless millions of the human family, should dwell forever. The existence of this heavenly country was by faith as clearly apprehended, and thus his faith became the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for, even beyond the bounds of time. Hence "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Here, my brethren, is a clear illustration of faith. It would be difficult to conceive one more clear. Let this, therefore, be applied to all that God has revealed, to all that he has promised, to all that he has commanded, and we see what faith is.

With this illustration in mind, let us for a moment turn our attention to what may be properly denominated *Christian* faith.

In the scriptures, God has revealed himself to men. There he has declared the origin of the world and the creation of man. There, we are informed of our relations to God, and men, and eternity, and of the obligations arising out of these relations, and binding upon us in all possible circumstances. There we have an account of man's apostasy, of the nature, tendencies

and fearful consequences of sin. There we have a full and minute revelation of the system of redemption through the holy life, the sacrificial death, the resurrection and intercession of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. There are warnings, and invitations, and promises;—and there, heaven with its everlasting glories, and hell with its interminable woes, are opened to our view. Now it is a fact, that, through a process and under influences hereafter to be considered, men have come to feel that all this is reality. Of the existence of God, and all else named, as revealed in the scriptures, they have had no more doubt, than of their own existence, or of the most familiar objects around them. All has been so impressed upon their hearts, so interwoven with all their thoughts and motives, as to form their moral character; in all, they have confided with not the slightest misgiving. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, they have looked to heaven with ever-growing desire, and rejoiced in firm and assured hope of eternal life. This, my brethren, is faith. It is saving faith. This is the faith which all must exercise, or perish in sin at the last. I trust it has been stated and illustrated in a manner adapted to the capacities of all.

II. This faith stands in the power of God.

The exercise of natural faith, faith with respect to worldly objects, is easy. With such objects we are familiar. But where things invisible, and relating to our future being, are presented as objects of faith, it is otherwise. Who has not felt his weakness, and want of power to look with clear perception into the spirit world, and comprehend and seize with assurance, eter-

nal things. This weakness was felt by one of old, who exclaimed, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." It was felt by the disciples of Christ, when they prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." Besides, it is a melancholy truth, that to men unrenewed—to men whose hearts are depraved and unreconciled to God, the great body of spiritual truth is unwelcome. By their depravity they are powerfully inclined either to neglect, or pervert and oppose it. This disposition was prevalent during the personal ministry of our Lord. He marvelled because of the unbelief of the people. He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. And can we hope that faith will spring up in such soil?—that men so depraved, so filled with enmity against God and truth, will come to exercise a cordial and obedient faith? It never will be, by any mere human reasoning, or persuasion, or power.

"Faith," said an inspired writer, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. x. 17.) The instrumentality of the word of God in begetting true faith, is largely taught in the scriptures. All true faith, therefore, stands in, rests upon, and is sustained by, the word of God. But then that word must be clothed with divine power. The Spirit of God must be in the word with his almighty energy, to render it effectual. The presence of the Spirit with divine energy in the truth, where it is effectual, where it begets true faith, is distinctly recognized in the apostolic writings. Said Paul, (1 Thess. i. 5,) "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The effect of the gospel, thus clothed with divine energy, is stated in the next verse: "And ye became followers of us and of

the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Again, the same apostle, speaking of his own experience and that of his brethren, said, (2. Cor. iv. 6,) "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This language is plain and strong. Here we find Christians, who had received the word and become followers of the Lord, who with joy beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; in a word, who were living by faith. But how were they brought from the darkness of sin and unbelief into this blessed state? Plainly by the power of the divine Spirit, "through the word of God." Their faith, therefore, through their own exercise, was begotten in them by divine power. In this important sense, their faith stood in the power of God. In the same sense does all true and saving faith stand in the power of God.

It may be profitable to trace the beginning and progress of this faith in the heart of man. This I cannot do better than by stating the outlines of a case which passed under my own observation. F— — was a young man of amiable disposition and correct general deportment. From childhood, he had been accustomed to attend upon the worship of God in an evangelical congregation. But, although entertaining respect for the Christian religion, his mind seems not to have become solemnly and permanently impressed with its sublime truths. He loved his friends, and was much given to social amusements. On one occasion he was attracted to a "place of worship where he had not usually attended, by motives of curiosity. When entering that house

of God, he had no thought of being interested in the services, or of deriving any spiritual benefit from what he might there hear. He had another end in view. But the sequel shows that God was directing his steps with a gracious design respecting him. In the course of the sermon, he found himself, for the first time in his life, lost to surrounding objects, and his mind intently fixed on the subject of the sermon. He left, with no thought of becoming serious, or at present changing his course of life. And yet, during the week his mind seemed held to a contemplation of what he had heard. The Sabbath came again, and, prompted by a desire to hear something similar to what had so interested him on the preceding Sabbath, he resorted to the same place of worship, and listened with still deeper interest to the message of mercy from heaven. As yet, even, the thought did not enter his mind that he was becoming serious. Soon, however, he found that his relish for social amusements was gone. The Bible became to him an interesting book; nor had any other place the attraction to him, of the house of God. His mind had now become solemnly and permanently impressed with divine things. He felt that he was a sinner in the sight of God, and the question of his own salvation from guilt and spiritual ruin, paramount to all others. He sought an interview with the minister whose preaching had arrested his attention, and listened to such private instruction as he was able to give. He visited the social meeting, and became conversant with those who there met in Christian love for the worship of their common Lord; nor was it long before he perceived in Jesus Christ a Saviour for sinful and perishing men, a Saviour for his own soul. And now, the

view which he had of Christ, of the fullness of his grace, invited his confidence, and encouraged him to prayer. Now he felt the risings of hope in his own soul, while he rested in the merits of atoning blood, and felt his soul joined to Christians as it had never been joined to friends before. With him, old things had passed away, and, behold, all things had become new. Here was a great change. It was a matter of perfect consciousness to himself, and was seen and acknowledged by his former most intimate associates.

To what, my brethren, shall we trace all this? Plainly, to the word of truth. It commenced in attention to the truth which he heard in that first sermon. It progressed under the influence of truth, as he listened to it in the house of God, and read it in the holy scriptures. But was there no agency back of all this? He had heard the truth before, for years, but with no such impressions as he now felt. Why did the truth take so firm a hold upon his heart now? I can give no other answer than that furnished by the apostle, in a passage already quoted. Our gospel came not now to him in "word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." God, by his Spirit, shone in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. God opened the eyes of his understanding. God impressed the truth upon his heart, and in the end inspired him with an energy to embrace and cleave to the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. His faith, therefore, stood in the power of God.

It is true, my brethren, that the circumstances attending the conversion of men to the faith of Christ, are not alike in every case. Some may trace their awakening

to the preached word. Some may trace it to the truth as read in the inspired Scriptures, or, it may be, in other books. Others may have been brought to serious reflection by the conversation and kind solicitude of Christian friends. But, whatever the immediate instrumentality may have been, the influence of truth and the energy of the Spirit are present in every case of true conversion. No one of our apostate race ever became a Christian—no one was ever raised up from death in trespasses and sins to a life of faith, but by the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Trusting that enough has been said to give you a true idea of the nature of saving faith, and to make it plain that such faith stands in the power of God, I shall close with a few reflections:

1. In the light of this subject, we see wherein the faith of nominal Christians is defective. To the general truth of Christianity they yield an intellectual assent: but they have no profound impressions of the importance of that truth. It has no hold upon their hearts. It does not mould their moral characters, nor direct their lives. Nor does it sustain or comfort them in prospect of a future existence. They live for the world, notwithstanding their faith. It is not to the saving of their souls. It must fail them at the last. Of all this are you not conscious, my friends? Do you never feel, in view of coming events—events which no living man can shun—that you need firmer ground to stand upon? What that ground is, you may now see. To bring you upon that ground, you need help from on high. God must work in you, impressing divine truth upon your hearts;—must open the eyes of your under-

standings to see eternal things in their true light, and in their bearing upon your own eternal destiny ;—must shine in your hearts to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ ;—must inspire you with power to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel. This done, you can rest on his word with a full and joyful confidence. This done, you have a firm foundation on which to stand, in every condition into which you may be brought during your mortal lives, and assurance for the future, which will sustain and cheer you when heart and flesh shall fail you. Faith, standing in the wisdom of man, will, must fail you ; but faith standing in the power of God, never. Short of this faith, be entreated never to rest. To come into the exercise of it, strive now. Let this be your first, your most anxious concern. No earthly interests can be of equal importance to you. This, rightly viewed, is the great business of every man's life here. Dying in Jesus,—in other words, in the faith of the gospel, sustained and blessed by its glorious hope,—no man has lived in vain. Dying out of him, with no vital union to him by faith, with no hope for eternity, life has been worse than wasted.

2. In the light of this subject, we see the importance of those serious impressions which are often felt by the unrenewed.

It is not uncommon for persons of various ages, and in different circumstances, to become the subjects of serious impressions. A cloud of gloom is cast over all their earthly prospects and pleasures. Life seems short to them, and they are in a manner constrained to think upon their latter end. But too often, alas! these impressions are neglected, if not perseveringly resisted.

Seldom, I fear, do those who feel them, consider from whence they come. They are regarded, perhaps, as happening to men through the influence of surrounding circumstances. In them, no gracious and important design is perceived. But, viewed as it should be, it is an instructive fact, that such impressions, in thousands of cases, have resulted in conversion. This fact shows that they did not happen without design. They were produced by the Spirit of God. In them, he designed nothing less than the renewing and salvation of those who felt them. Do I speak to any now, who are the subjects of such impressions? If so, I would solemnly assure you that the present is an important time with you. You are the subjects of impressions which are absolutely necessary to your salvation. God is now moving you; he is causing you to see the uncertain and fading nature of all earthly possessions and sources of pleasure. He is influencing you to look to your latter end, to contemplate your future everlasting existence. He would make you feel the importance of preparation for that existence, and lead you to the fountain of life. Your present impressions, cherished and yielded to, may, nay, will, result in the submission of your heart to God, and in the springing up in you, of divine and saving faith. O, it is of the tender mercy of God that you feel as you do. You might, before this, have been abandoned to your own blindness, and hardness, and insensibility: but you have not been thus abandoned. The Spirit of grace is striving with you; and can you resist him? Would you forget the impressions he is making in your hearts? Would you again become stupid and insensible? Would you again become thoughtless of your future being, and live as if you had

no soul to save? I beseech you, think what may be the consequence, should you succeed in all this. Should you be finally abandoned by the Spirit, your case would be hopeless. You would never feel again what all must feel, to come to a saving knowledge of the gospel. O, then, I beseech you, cherish your present solemn impressions. Yield your heart to them. Fear nothing so much as being left again in a state of spiritual insensibility. Be willing to feel, and feel deeply, in view of your sins, and in view of your danger, and never suffer yourselves to rest, till, by a living, divine faith, you can look to Christ as your own Saviour,—till, confiding in him alone, you can rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3. My Christian brethren, let this subject impress your minds with the importance of living constantly in the exercise of divine faith, and of continuing ever in the Spirit.

Christians should not live to themselves alone. They are bound by various social ties to those around them. They should be Christians with respect to others. Living by faith, in constant communion with God and with heaven, they may be the medium through which salvation shall reach those with whom they are conversant. Scarcely can it fail to be so. The influence of holy men, of men joined to Jesus by a living faith, and daily drawing water with joy out of the wells of salvation, is and must be felt. Such men are lights in the world. They are the salt of the earth. The revelations of the last day will show how many have been impressed and brought to exercise saving faith in Christ, through the silent but ever active influence of consistent, uniform and deep-toned personal piety in the children of God. In a sense, God is in them, enlightening,

impressing, and saving men. Are you Christians? you cannot but desire the salvation of those around you. To promote it, must be an object dear to your hearts. And how can you do it? In no way so effectually as by a life of faith; in no way so certainly as by being yourself filled with the fullness of God, and breathing always the atmosphere of heaven. Strive, then, thus to live, for your own sake, nor less for the sake of those with whom you are associated. Transient, fiery zeal, and impassioned appeals, can never do the work of a holy life.

The influence of a consistent and fervent piety in the conversion of men and the enlargement of the Church, is clearly seen in the account given of the progress of the churches of Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, in the apostles' times. (Acts ix. 31.) "Then had the churches rest, throughout Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Let us, my brethren, steadily strive to be followers of these early Christians in our walk, in our spirit. Thus doing, the number of the faithful among us will be multiplied, to our own exceeding joy, and to the glory of him who "loved us, and gave himself for us." And now, may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, to whom be glory forever.—AMEN.

SERMON XI.

NATURE AND EVIDENCES OF TRUE RELIGION IN THE SOUL.

2 CORINTHIANS XIII. 5.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

We have often sung,

"Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals, here below."

But is the important sentiment of these lines felt as it should be? There is much evidence to the contrary. Some, it is true, seem to be living under its solemn impression. With them, as is evident from their conversation, their serious and upright deportment, the concerns of religion are regarded as paramount to all other concerns. They are giving diligence to make their election sure. But of the great mass of men, even in Christian countries, this cannot be said. Thousands have never turned their attention to religion, as a serious and important personal concern. They are living without God and without hope in the world, and are destined, at last, to awake to a sense of their folly in neg-

lecting the *one thing* needful, when, perhaps, it will be too late to save themselves from the bitter consequences of their course.

Nor can we say, my brethren, that all who profess to have embraced religion—who call themselves Christians, are giving to the subject that serious and constant attention which its importance demands. Too many, even of those who are numbered with the followers of Christ, and are called by his holy and precious name, are far less concerned about the state of their hearts before God, and their prospects for the future world, than about the concerns of this present world. So evident is this, that I need not say one word in confirmation of it. Indeed, it is often confessed: "I am too worldly-minded." "The concerns of this present life occupy my mind so fully, that upon the subject of religion, it is confused and shrouded in darkness." "I am not cheered and comforted by present communion with God, nor with clear hopes of his favor in the world to come." This, or language to the same import, is often heard from those who are connected with the Church.

And is this the way to live? Is such a state, a state of safety? Have such professors no reason to fear, lest a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should at last come short of it? For such fear there is great and alarming reason. Verily, brethren, it is high time to awake to a serious and faithful examination of our state, and of our prospects for the world to come. If there was occasion in the apostles' time to exhort Christians, as in the language of our text, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," &c.—there is occasion for earnestly

pressing the same exhortation now. This, by the assistance of divine grace, I desire to do on the present occasion. And O may the searching power of the Spirit be with us, and assist and direct us in all our meditations, that we may come to a true knowledge of our own state, and of the grace of God which bringeth salvation!

Throughout the Christian scriptures, the salvation of fallen man is connected with faith in Christ. Christ is the Saviour, mighty to save, to whom, in the final consummation of the triumphs of his gospel, all the myriads of the redeemed will ascribe honor, and power, and glory forever, as their Saviour. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Thus Christ declared himself to be the Saviour of men, and as plainly declared the connection of faith with salvation: "That *whosoever believeth*, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This sentiment is involved, moreover, in the ministerial commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved;—but he that believeth not shall be damned." And how abundantly the same sentiment is taught in the writings of the apostles, must be known to all who have, with care, read the sacred book. "Being justified by *faith*, we have peace with God, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*." By *faith* we have access into the grace, wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "By grace we

are saved *through faith*, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God."

In view of all this, my hearers, can we rationally expect salvation, without faith? Most certainly not. Without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, our atoning Saviour, we have no spiritual life here, and no good hope of life eternal in the world to come. Without faith, we must perish at last, in eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. It is important to notice, moreover, that not all that is called faith, is to the saving of the soul. Perhaps some may say, "We verily believe, without a doubt, that Christ came into the world—that he taught the truth—that he proved his mission divine, by the miracles which he wrought—that he died in innocency for the sins of men, and that he rose from the dead on the third day; and they may ask, Is anything more necessary to complete our faith, and render it saving to our own souls? To this I answer: If all this is barely an unhesitating intellectual assent to the great truths contemplated, your faith is lacking in a very important point. It will sooner or later fail you. But it may be said farther, "We have been the subjects of very strong feelings and emotions upon the subject of religion. We have been deeply convicted of sin, and greatly distressed on account of it. From that distress we have been suddenly delivered, and filled with great joy. Can all this have been, and yet our faith be unsound, and we still remain in a perishing condition? It may be so. Thousands have spoken of their faith, of their conviction, and of their relief and joy, in equally strong terms, who have failed to live the life of faith. They have sunk into the

spirit of the world, and lived under its dominion, notwithstanding their former religious emotions, and their avowed faith in Christ. This fact has proved their faith defective.

Examine yourselves, whether ye *be in the faith.* Does not this phrase, *in the faith*, imply something more than an intellectual assent to the doctrines of the Christian faith? Does it not imply the permanent settlement of the heart in that faith? Does it not imply a vital union of the soul to the ever blessed object of that faith, so that the true believer becomes animated by a new life—the spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Plainly it does. Such was the view of St. Paul, when, writing to the Ephesians, he expressed his anxious desire, which, upon his bended knees, he ceased not to breathe in prayer to God in their behalf. It was, that God would "grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;—that Christ might *dwell in their hearts by faith;*—that they, being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Than this, I know of no language which more clearly, and strongly, and beautifully expresses the power of true faith in the soul of the believer, or that gives a clearer view of its blessed effects upon the heart. According to this passage, true faith, through the exercise of our own powers of mind and heart, is at the same time the product of the Spirit of God, working within us according to the riches of his glory. By that

faith Christ dwells in our hearts, so that our souls become swallowed up in his love; or, in the language of the apostle, "rooted and grounded in love." Hence we have a perception—a clear comprehension, of the amazing love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and are filled with the fullness of God. And thus the peace of God comes to rule in our hearts—the peace that passes understanding. Our own *wills*, in a manner become lost, and the will of an indwelling Christ, is the governing will of our lives. We joyfully choose with his choice, and act with his will.

Such, my brethren, is the nature of true faith, such the power by which it is inwrought in the heart, and such its blessed effects. Here we may see something of the import of the phrase, "*in the faith*." It is a firm and blessed settlement of the heart in the great and sublime doctrines of the Christian faith. It is a consequent union of the soul to Christ, who is said to dwell in us by, or through faith, so that in him we become partakers of the divine nature—filled with the fullness of God, and thus assured of eternal life and blessedness at the final coming of Christ. Compared with this divine faith, what is a cold intellectual assent to the truth of Christianity? It is as the clay-cold corpse, compared with the living, healthful, vigorous man. O, rest not in it. Never rest; never cease to cry to God, till he shall work in you a living, divine and powerful faith—till you feel the witness of sins forgiven through the precious blood of Christ—till Christ is formed in you the hope of glory. O that this faith might increase and abound among us!

Father of mercies, and giver of all grace, in mercy behold thy people now before thee, and

"The veil of unbelief remove,
And, by thy manifested love,
And by thy sprinkled blood,
Destroy the love of sin in us,
And get thyself the victory
And bring us back to God."

To be assured that he is in this faith—that he is joined to Christ by indissoluble ties of grace—that his treasure is above, his eternal portion, the unspeakable riches of divine love, is the privilege of every Christian. Do any of you desire, strongly desire, to be thus assured? Does it appear to you of the greatest importance to be well and rationally satisfied with respect to your gracious state, and do you now resolve, by the assistance of divine grace, to seek that assurance and satisfaction? Do you, in the language of the text, resolve to examine and prove yourselves, whether your are in the faith? Then, with a desire to afford you some assistance in so important a matter, I will present to your consideration some scriptural indications of a settlement in the faith of a gracious state.

Before noticing some particulars, I make one general remark: Through faith, man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. In other words, Christ dwells in the heart of the true believer by his Spirit. Hence the strong expression of the apostle, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates?" And again, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It is evident, therefore, that those who are in the faith—in whom Christ dwells by his Spirit, will feel and manifest a general sympathy with him. In their measure, they will feel as he felt, in similar circumstances. They will love the things

which he loved, and hate what he hated. And in their walk, they will act, in some good measure, at least, according to the inward promptings of his Spirit; and the world will "take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus."

Hence, by a consideration of the general inclination of our hearts with regard to the cause of Christ in the world, we may decide with accuracy, whether we are in the faith or not. If the life, the spirit of our blessed Lord, as manifested in his teachings, his works, and in all his intercourse with men, engage our love, and attract us in the same direction, this fact may be regarded as strong evidence that we are truly in the faith, and partakers of the divine nature. It is Christ in us. It is the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that so inclines us to truth and holiness. But we will pass to notice some particulars.

1. If you are in the faith, there will be times, at least, when you will have a heartfelt sense of divine things—when the things revealed in the scriptures, will seem to you real, and of the greatest importance. Do you read or think of God, the Creator and upholder of all? You feel that he exists, and you are impressed with a deep and solemn awe of him. You fear him with a filial fear. Do you read of sin, as committed against God, and incurring his just and dreadful displeasure? It appears to you exceedingly sinful; you loathe and abhor it; and in view of your own sins, you feel deeply humbled and abased before God. Do you read of the amazing mercy of God revealed in the gospel, by which a way has been opened for the salvation of the guilty and perishing? Your heart is affected by the view of that mercy, and you feel to praise its

glorious and blessed Author. Do you read of the Lord Jesus Christ, as coming down from heaven, into this world—as taking upon him human nature, for the fulfilment of the law, and the suffering of death for men—as rising from the dead, by the power of the eternal Spirit, and ascending in glory to a seat at the right hand of the majesty on high, there to intercede for men, and from thence to give repentance unto men, and forgiveness of sins? Of the whole, wonderful and mysterious as it is, you are fully, joyfully assured. You feel that it is all reality, and, confiding in the Lord that was slain but is alive again, you rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Do you read of the world to come—of heaven, of its eternal glory, and of the multitudes of holy beings who there rejoice forever in the fullness of divine love, in the effulgence of divine glory—of hell, where all the incorrigibly rebellious spirits of the universe suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, the horrors of outer darkness? You have a heartfelt conviction of their existence: with trembling in view of the latter, you rejoice in prospect of the former.

And now, my brethren, are the great things revealed in the scriptures thus now heartfelt and real to you? There may be seasons when the Christian's faith is weak, when he holds on upon the great realities of revealed religion with a trembling hand. This may be occasioned by the influence of surrounding circumstances. By such influence, his mind may have been diverted from a steady contemplation of those truths by which true faith is sustained. He may, by the peculiar shaping of worldly circumstances, or by the subtle sophistries of opposers, be thrown into confusion of thought, and involved in great mental perplex-

ity. Amid such perplexity, his faith, for a time, may tremble. The liability to all this was seen by our Lord. He knew the assaults made upon the faith of Peter. Said he, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." And thus he watches over the faith of Christians every where, and though it may be shaken, though it may be subjected to severe trials, it will rise again, and wax the stronger for the tests to which it is put, and triumph, in the end, over all opposing influences. These trials of a Christian's faith, therefore, are not to be taken as evidence against its genuineness. The fact that it sometimes brings eternal things near, and in all circumstances rests upon Jesus as a Saviour, is evidence of its soundness. If, then, my Christian brethren, you can discern these traits, and are conscious of this effect in your own faith, I would say unto you, in the language of inspiration, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

2. Strong and permanent disfellowship with all sin, is another indication of a standing in the faith. Of Christ, it is testified that he was holy, harmless and undefiled. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. The measure and strength of his opposition to all sin, is strikingly manifest in all his teachings upon earth. Against it, wherever found, whether in high places or low, he bore the most pointed testimony; and of his descriptions of the final, the everlasting punishment of sin, who can think without trembling! It is impossible to conceive of any thing more fearful. But what is most of all impressive, is the fact, that to atone for sin and open the door of escape from the wrath to come,

he gave himself a sacrifice for the guilty. Contemplate the last conflicts of your Saviour in the garden, when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—when, in an agony, he sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground—on the cross, when he exclaimed, as the deep billows passed over his holy soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" In those conflicts, in the agonies of the garden and the anguish of the cross, you may see what were his feelings with respect to sin. All was suffered for the expiation of sin. All was endured, that he might deliver men from sin, and renew them unto holiness. And can it be otherwise, than that he who has believed, who is settled in the Christian faith, so as to feel a spiritual union to him who suffered thus for sin, will feel, from his inmost soul, opposed to it? Will not the prevalence of sin around him, give him heartfelt pain? Will not the consciousness of remaining sin in himself, grieve him? It must be so. No man can live in union with Christ by faith, and not from his inmost soul abhor sin, and thirst for perfect freedom from it. Hence the breathings of the pious, for cleansing from its pollutions, recorded in the scriptures.

And, my brethren, is sin, wherever seen, and however manifested, abhorrent to you? Do your hearts, under strong impressions, sometimes breathe to God the prayer of the psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me?" Do you sometimes feel as did the Christian poet, when he sung,

"Break off the yoke of inbred sin,
And fully set my spirit free;
I cannot rest till pure within—
Till I am wholly lost in thee."

Then be encouraged to expect the fulfilment of your desire. Such language is the breathing of a renewed nature within you, and furnishes evidence that you are in the faith.

3. Communion of spirit with the truly pious, is an evidence of standing in the faith.

There are men in this sin-darkened world, of truly pious spirit. In their conversation and general walk, they manifest a spirit that is not of this world. Their treasure, their hopes are above, and their conversation is in heaven, from whence they look for the Lord Jesus Christ, without sin, unto salvation. To Christ, through faith, they are indebted for all that distinguishes them from the world. Now as men of similar views, and feelings, and pursuits, naturally associate together, and experience satisfaction in each other's society, so it is with Christians. They are joined by a common faith to one Lord—are animated by the same spirit of life in Christ Jesus—are cheered by the same hope of eternal life in heaven—are subject to the same trials, and blessed with the same divine consolations. They are, therefore, pre-eminently of one mind and heart. They are bound to each other, by ties stronger and more enduring than any which ever did or can unite men of the world. This union of spirit among Christians, is often clearly and strongly manifested when they meet. What, though they may have been strangers, men of different nations, reared amid widely different scenes and customs; meeting in the name of Christ, their common Saviour, they feel at once the kindlings of brotherly affection. Touching the great truths and hopes of our holy religion, they speak the same things. Among them, heart meets heart, love mingles with love, and

spirit communes with spirit. It is so, moreover, among Christians of vastly different circumstances in the present life. Christian men of high standing, of high intellectual cultivation, have often felt the risings of brotherly love toward the most illiterate peasant, and the slave, and have listened with heartfelt satisfaction to the simplest breathings of their renewed hearts. In an important sense, in Christ, there is neither rich nor poor, learned nor unlearned, bond nor free. In Jesus these momentary distinctions are lost sight of. Christian experience unites all in one blessed hope, and binds all in one common love. This is a blessed communion. It was contemplated by the devout king of Israel with high satisfaction. "Behold," said he, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

My brethren, do you drink into this spirit? Are you thus united in heart with saints, wherever you may meet them? Are you blessed in communion with the devout and holy? All this cannot be, in the absence of union to Christ by a living, saving faith. If, therefore, this is true of you, you may well rejoice, for your names are written in heaven, engraved upon the heart of the Son of God; and the day is coming, when, with countless millions of like faith, and of kindred spirit, you will be permitted to join in an eternal feast of love before the throne of God.

4. Devotion to and pleasure in the diffusion of the

Christian religion in the world, are tokens of true faith.

The diffusion of the gospel, and the certainty of its saving conquests in the hearts of men over all the earth, are matters of plain prophesy. The leaven of truth is to work in human society, till the whole shall be leavened. Jesus, from his throne in heaven, will yet look down upon this world, and see, with satisfaction, of the travail of his soul in every land. This great work, from the beginning, has been carried forward through the prayers and labors of Christians. Who, that has a Christian heart, has not contemplated with high satisfaction the zeal of the apostles and other Christians of their age, to make known the riches of grace in Christ. Their hearts were swallowed up in the work, nor was there anything which seemed to fill them with joy, like the triumphs of the gospel in the salvation of men. And in what age since, have not Christians sought to extend the knowledge of salvation by the cross, among the fallen sons of men? Call to mind the great company of Christian missionaries now employed in heathen lands, sent forth by the pious of the various evangelical denominations; contemplate the accumulated facilities for diffusing Christian knowledge among the benighted of those lands; consider the blessed results already witnessed in the conversion of men, and the planting of Christian churches as light-houses amid the surrounding moral darkness. This, my brethren, is all under God, the work of Christians. And does it not prove the existence of faith in the churches? Do we not here see evidence of the most convincing nature, that there are many in the churches who are in union with Christ, and who are acting under the promptings

of the same love which brought him from heaven into this world? In this work Christians are but acting out their new and divine nature. How then, I ask, can a man be a Christian and not enter heartily into it, as he may have opportunity? It cannot be.

How then, my brethren, is it with you? Do you contemplate the spread of the gospel in the world with heartfelt satisfaction? Do you rejoice at the multiplying conquests of the Saviour among men at home, abroad—wherever his gospel is published? And do you, with a willing heart, enter into the great work? To all this, if you are truly in the faith, you can answer affirmatively.

With a few words, I pass to a close.

My brethren, you have listened to what has now been said, with attention, and I trust, with suitable interest. And what is the conclusion to which you come with respect to your state? At some conclusion every person may arrive, by proper reflection and self-examination. In doubt respecting our present spiritual state, and our prospects for the everlasting future, we need not live. Are we Christians—are we included in the great family of true believers in Jesus, we may be assured of it. And it is important that we should be thus assured. The language of doubt, so often uttered by professing Christians, exerts an unhappy influence upon those who hear it. It doubtless leaves upon the minds of those without, an impression that the Christian life is one of sadness and gloom—an impression exceedingly far from truth. Such language was not heard from apostles and primitive Christians. They knew in whom they had believed, and were persuaded that he was able to keep what they, in faith, had com-

mitted to him, till the great day of rewards. They spoke in language of full and joyful confidence. Such might be, and such should be the language of Christians now. Were it such, they would be far more effective witnesses for Christ than many are. I beseech you, therefore, suffer a word of exhortation. From this day forth let self-examination be a part of your daily employment. Seek to gain a clear perception of the marks of true faith, and inquire with care, and with prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whether they are apparent in your spirit, in your moral feelings, in your conversation, and in your works. Such a course, if you are truly in union with Christ by faith, cannot fail to bring you into a full and joyful assurance of it. Such assurance will make you a blessing to the world. Should you find your faith defective, and yourself yet an alien from God, any one of you, I beseech you, rest not till, by the power of the Spirit, Christ is revealed in you; till, in spirit joined to him, you can say, "Jesus, my Saviour!"—AMEN.

SERMON XII.

CHRISTIAN SANCTIFICATION.

JOHN XVII. 17.

Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is trnth.

The personal ministry of our Lord upon earth was now drawing to a close. He had committed to his chosen disciples the words, the body of truth which the Father had given him. He had instituted the ordinance, and explained its designs, which was to be observed by his disciples in commemoration of his death, through all future time. Judas, the traitor, had gone to the chief priests, to negotiate for his betrayal. Under the shadows of the evening, he was alone with his disciples. In these circumstances, having spoken to them in a discourse unsurpassed in human language, in clearness, in affection, and solemnity, and importance, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and breathed for them and for the saints of succeeding ages, the prayer of which the text is a part. Never was a prayer before offered in such circumstances—never one so replete

with the breathings of confidence and affection. To the disciples, that must have been an occasion of unutterable solemnity and awe; for on that occasion, heaven and earth were brought together in an unwonted manner.

In the substance of that prayer, my brethren, we all have an interest. Are we Christians? Though unconscious of it ourselves, we were present in the mind and heart of the Son of God when it was offered. With him, strictly speaking, there was neither past nor future time. With him all times were present. From the point which he then occupied, he beheld, as if then present with him, all who should believe on him through the word of the apostles, to the end of time. By him, all the circumstances and trials through which they would be called to pass, were clearly seen, and perfectly understood. From that point, looking up to heaven, he commended them all to the divine favor and protection. For us, then, that prayer went up to heaven. For us it is recorded there, and it will not fail to return in blessings upon the faithful, till the last heir of glory has entered upon his unfading inheritance on high. How often, therefore, should we read it; how devoutly ponder its contents!

Among the blessings which our blessed Lord asked in behalf of his disciples in this prayer, was, their sanctification. "Sanctify them," he prayed, "through thy truth; thy word is truth." And surely, my brethren, since our Saviour, amid circumstances so solemn and impressive, has prayed for our sanctification, we should look for and earnestly seek the blessing ourselves. That we may do this understandingly and successfully, let us consider in what sanctification consists, how it

is effected, and what is necessary on our part to secure it.

I. Let us consider in what Christian sanctification consists.

Sanctification sometimes consists in setting apart, or consecrating to a sacred use. In this sense, the seventh day, the Aaronic priests, the temple at Jerusalem, and the vessels and sacred vestments, were sanctified. They were taken from common, and set apart to sacred purposes, connected with the service of God. In this sense, even Christ was sanctified. He was consecrated to the work of a world's redemption. Speaking of himself, he said: "Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world"; and, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." This he did, when, according to the councils of infinite wisdom, and the promptings of divine mercy, he gave himself up to the work of man's salvation; when, on the cross, he offered himself without spot, unto God, for us, and when he entered into the holy place above, by a new and living way, consecrated by his own blood, and ascended the mediatorial throne.

Sanctification consists, moreover, in cleansing the object sanctified—in making that which is impure, pure. With respect to the souls of men, it consists in the removal of moral pollution. In the sanctification of Christians, the two ideas seem to be united. There is in the progress of their sanctification, a cleansing from moral pollution, from what the apostle calls, "the filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and a self-consecration to God and his glory. Of the corruptions of human nature, the apostle has given us a striking picture,

under the name of "the works of the flesh." "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Such is the moral pollution in which human nature is involved, and from which men must be freed, before they can participate in the bliss of the holy in heaven. Of its existence in themselves, Christians have been made sensible. Paul was sensible of it, when he said, "I find then, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thousands in every age since, have felt it, when under the enlightening and convincing strivings of the Holy Spirit. It is true, that in conversion, a blow is struck at these corrupt propensities. A principle is planted amid the sensualities of fallen human nature, which is antagonistic to them, and which, under divine culture, is destined to live and gain strength, and extend its influence till the whole man is brought under its control. It was for this that our Lord prayed. In proportion as this divine principle, this new nature from above, gains strength, and extends its control over our moral nature, our sanctification is advanced.

And does sin remain in converted men? Are they sensible of its motions in them? Nothing, my brethren, is more certain. If it is not so, why did a devout man of old pray for a clean heart and a right spirit? Thus fervently he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew in me a right spirit." If it is not so, why did an apostle pray for the sanctification of his brethren, in the

following strong language? "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." But I need not urge this point. Christians who hear me, need not to be convinced on this point. They know it full well. Where is the Christian, who never, since his translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, though perfectly conscious that a great work has been done in him—that holy affections and holy desires have sprung up in his heart—felt the risings of anger, or pride, or unholy desire, or of some of the propensities of fallen nature? Such an one cannot be found. Grief, under a consciousness of the remains of inbred sin, is common to Christian experience. Godly sorrow is mingled with the joy of hope throughout the Church of Christ. Witness it in the penitent confessions, the earnest pleadings of the pious of every age. This solemn truth lies on the face of the language of devotion used in every evangelical church.

I do not say, my brethren, that Christians are under the dominion of sin—that they are like others, its bond-slaves. In them its power is broken. In a sense, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death"; and whatever struggles they may find necessary on account of its remains within, faith in Christ insures victory to them. But I do say, that Christians are sensible of the risings of the corrupt propensities spoken of by the apostle, and that their sanctification consists in their destruction, in the purification of their hearts from all filthiness of the flesh, and in the renewing of their moral natures in righteousness and true holiness.

The progress of Christian sanctification may be plainly traced in the lives of holy men. Who that reads, with suitable attention, the records of the Christian experience of such men as David Brainerd, Edward Payson, Henry Martyn and Samuel Pierce, can fail to perceive their progress in holiness? Mark their early conflicts with the powers of sin, their hard and painful struggles with conscious inbred sin. Sometimes, amid those conflicts, they were so pressed that they scarcely could speak, but in language of despondency. But let us follow them on through life, and observe their course. It will appear most plainly to have been heavenward. As they advanced, they seemed to breathe a pure spiritual atmosphere, and to become more and more heavenly in their views and feelings and conversation, till in the end they were filled with the fullness of God, and perfectly swallowed up in the spirit of heaven.

Nor is it difficult for Christians, in whom this work is truly advancing, to trace its progress in themselves. Does the Christian feel that his attachments to the things of time are growing less, while his attractions heavenward are growing stronger? Does he find that his own will is becoming more and more fully swallowed up in the divine will? Does he find, as months pass away, his aversion to all sin growing stronger? Does he find himself more meek and patient in trials, and more forgiving of injuries; in these and other points he may perceive clear evidence that the work of sanctification is advancing in him. The old man, with the affections and lusts thereof, is dying within him, while the new man in Christ, is rising into new strength and vigor. The corrupt propensities of his fallen nature,

are giving place to an all-pervading divine love; and to the lovely graces of the Spirit, which make up the mature Christian character. He is advancing toward that state contemplated by the apostle—"perfect and complete in all the will of God."

For this it was that our Saviour prayed in our behalf. He designed nothing less than our full and everlasting redemption from all sin and moral pollution. And for this, encouraged by his prayer, and the numerous and exceedingly precious promises of his word, we should look and strive with steadfast faith, till in humble triumph we can sing—

> "Satan, with all his arts, no more,
> Me, from the gospel hope can move;
> I shall receive the gracious power,
> And find the pearl of perfect love."

II. Let us consider how this work is to be effected.

This is an important point. Respecting it, different views are entertained. These views have exerted a powerful influence either to promote or retard the sanctification, according to their truth or falseness. There are many who seem to have no idea of any other sanctification than what is in the power of man. They suppose, that when it shall be their pleasure, they can of themselves turn from sin to holiness. But whoever harbors such an opinion is under great deception. He has never seen the full measure of his pollution, nor the depth of his moral degradation and misery. He has not felt the force of the humbling truth, that man is carnal, sold under sin,—that men in the flesh cannot please God. He does not perceive from whence alone man's help cometh. Do any of you, my friends, cherish

the opinion that you can, of yourself, turn from sin, and cleanse your hearts from moral pollution? You are cherishing a dangerous delusion. Do the utmost you can at reforming yourselves, still the deep corruption of you heart will cleave to you; still sin will reign in you, and, left to your own exertions, it will reign unto death.

It is quite evident, moreover, that many *Christians* have but a very imperfect perception of the truth upon this important subject. They know something of the strength and depth of human depravity; they groan for deliverance from it. They sometimes hunger and thirst after righteousness; but how to obtain it, they find not. This is the point at which they err. They depend too much upon their own resolutions and efforts. They seek to overcome sin and attain to holiness in an unevangelical way, till, discouraged by repeated failures, they sink into a desponding state, and spend the greater part of their lives in spiritual bondage. All this is in consequence of not clearly perceiving and fully embracing the truth, that sanctification is the work of God in the heart. It is a truth, that sanctification in Christians is effected by the Spirit of God through the truth. No power short of his, can subdue the evil propensities of the human heart, and prepare it for the production of the fruits of holiness. Such is the plain teaching of the scriptures. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and

ever." And again : " Elect according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." These passages, together with many others of similar import, fully establish the point under consideration.

Again, I remark, that the sanctification of Christians is effected through the truth. This is expressed in the text : "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth."

It is not difficult to perceive the influence of Christian truth upon the hearts of those who are advancing in spiritual holiness. Christians can distinctly perceive it in their own experience, while in others, they observe a progress in the divine life, proportioned to the attention which they give to the divine word. It has not unfrequently occurred in the progress of the Church, that Christians have become the subjects of more than ordinarily deep and solemn religious impressions. In their view, a cloud has been thrown over the brightest worldly prospects. It has not been in the power of the world to cheer them. Vanity has been written upon all that is sought or valued by men of the world. They have inwardly sighed for something which they found not in wealth, or honor, or any source of worldly joy. Under such impressions, they have given more earnest attention to the word of God, and to other means of religious instruction. Pursuing this course, they have perceived, with great clearness, the holiness of God and his perfect law, while they have become sensible, painfully sensible, of the remains of depravity in themselves. They have groaned, being burdened with a load of sin. Deeply and earnestly have they sighed for deliverance.

Beautifully are their feelings and the breathings of their hearts expressed in the following Wesleyan stanzas:

"O, that my load of sin were gone!
O, that I could at last submit,
At Jesus' feet to lay me down;
To lay my soul at Jesus' feet.

"Rest for my soul I long to find;
Saviour of all, if mine thou art,
Give me thy meek and lowly mind,
And stamp thine image on my heart."

Nor has this been all. These deep and solemn impressions, these clear perceptions of the remains of moral impurity, these groanings under the load of remaining sin, and these earnest breathings for deliverance and for holiness, have been succeeded by most manifest advancement in piety. The subjects of them have become more spiritually minded, more steadfast in the Christian faith, more meek and lowly in the temper of their minds, more deeply affectionate to all around them, —more patient in trials, and more persevering in Christian labors; in a word, they have become more Christ-like. Now what is this, but an advancement in sanctification? It is manifestly so. It was the Spirit, that so impressed them with a sense of the emptiness of all mere earthly good, and moved them to a more serious contemplation of divine truth. It was the Spirit, that led them into such views of divine holiness, and of their own remaining corruption; and, by the same Spirit, they were enabled to perceive the provisions of divine grace in Christ, for their perfect cleansing from all sin, and by faith to appropriate those provisions to themselves. In all this, the old man, with the affections and lusts, has been crucified within them, while

the new man in Christ has become more vigorous and strong. In other words, while the power of sin has been weakened, love divine has been more fully diffused through the whole moral and spiritual man.

You will perceive that I have spoken of Christian sanctification as a progressive work. Such is the view of it presented in the holy scriptures. Thus it was viewed by Peter (2 Peter, i. 3—8): "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us unto glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For, if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here, a progressive advancement in holiness, toward completeness in the Christian character, is clearly recognized. The sentiment is expressed with equal clearness by Paul (2 Cor. III. 18): "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Beautifully does this passage express the sentiment of this sermon thus far. The Christian, contemplating divine truth in the fullness and richness of its revelations and teachings, beholds in it, with a clear vision, as in a glass, the glo-

ry of the Lord. Living under the influence of such divine manifestations, he is changed into the same image, from glory to glory. And all this is, by the Spirit of the Lord, working in him that which is well-pleasing in the sight of God.—Here I may leave this branch of the subject. It cannot be made more plain than it is made in these passages of the inspired word.

III. We come to consider what is necessary on the part of Christians, to secure the blessing of sanctification.

Upon this point, much need not be said. The true course for Christians is suggested by the preceding parts of this discourse. We have seen in what sanctification consists, and that it is by the Spirit of God through the truth. It follows, therefore, that, to secure the blessing, we must bring our hearts under, and yield them to the influence of the truth, as it may be brought home to us by the Holy Spirit. Yielding cordially to that influence, the effect will be certain. We shall be transformed, by the renewing of our minds, till we know "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It may be proper, however, to mention a few particulars, attention to which is requisite in order to our sanctification.

1. We should strive to gain clear perceptions of the nature of sin, and of our own state with respect to it. To these points so little attention is given by many, that they seem not to attain to any just sense of the exceeding evil of sin, or feel any painful conviction of its existence and workings in their hearts. In a manner, therefore, they are at ease, and know not the deep hungering and thirsting after righteousness, spoken of by

our Lord in his sermon on the mount. For the sanctification of such we cannot reasonably look. But let the Christian solemnly contemplate the nature and evil of sin, as it is seen in the holy scriptures; let him search his own heart in the light of God's word, till he feels that word piercing his heart, and laying open the hidden depths of its pollution; then he cannot remain indifferent, he cannot rest; then he will see the appropriateness of the earnest pleadings of him who of old prayed, "Search me and know my heart"—"Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." To the Christian, who, with such impressions, and convictions, and spirit-breathings, in humble confidence looks up to God, the promise is sure: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

2. We should strive, by diligent and careful study of the scriptures, to gain a clear perception of the nature of Christian sanctification. Fervent emotion and high raptures are often mistaken for it. This error has led many to labor for such raptures, and when they have been wrought into them, they have been looked upon as having made high attainments in holiness. But, alas, how often have such raptures proved to be short-lived! How often have they been succeeded by coldness and indifference! Their views were not sound, nor was there in the case of such persons any real advancement in holiness. But when, from the teachings of the divine word, a clear perception of the nature of sanctification is attained; when it is seen that it consists in the weakening, and in its consummation, the destruction of sinful propensities, and the diffusion of divine love through the moral nature of man, the cordial subjugation of his

powers and susceptibilities to the control of that love, the Christian, in these respects, is prepared for a realization of the blessing. And when the blessing is thus understandingly and truly realized, it is a blessing indeed. It is a radical work. It is a permanent advancement in real holiness. It is an advancement toward the state contemplated by the apostle, in which Christians are said to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

3. We should carefully cherish and cordially yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that he is the efficient agent in the important work under consideration. We have also contemplated the Christian's progress in holiness under his gracious power. Now, should we find our minds pervaded by a deep solemnity in view of the fading and transitory nature of all mere earthly good—should we begin to feel an increasing conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, we may be assured that the Holy Spirit is moving upon our hearts. God is graciously working within us in answer to the prayer of our blessed Lord. In these movings of his Spirit, these deep and solemn impressions, he designs the destruction of remaining sin in us, and the more complete renewing of our moral natures in righteousness and true holiness. How tenderly, therefore, should we cherish these impressions!—how cordially yield to them!—and how cautiously avoid every thing that may grieve the Spirit!

4. Whilst steadfastly looking to God to accomplish so great a work in our hearts, it is important for us to strive against all temptation from without, against all those influences of the world, which tend to darken our

minds, corrupt our hearts, and check our progress in holiness. You know, my brethren, how numerous, and pointed, and earnest the exhortations to this point, in the teachings of our Lord, and in the writings of the apostles. For such exhortations, and for such watchings and strivings, they saw sufficient reasons, in the circumstances by which the early Christians were surrounded. Nor are such reasons less numerous or less urgent in the circumstances around us. Watching and striving against sin, are absolutely essential to progress in holiness, every where and in every age of this fallen world. Let us, therefore, never lose sight of this truth. While looking to, and trusting in God, who worketh in us to will and to do his good pleasure, let us, according to his inward prompting, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

In conclusion, I remark, that there are exceedingly important reasons why every Christian should seek and strive for his own sanctification. Upon these reasons I will not now speak at length. I only remark, that, as the Christian advances in holiness, his own holy joy in God is increased. It is the pure in heart who see God, and who prove the full blessedness of communion with him. And in proportion to his advancement in purity and holy communion with God, will be his power for usefulness in the world. Men are blessed, and God is glorified in the holiness of his people. Seek, then, my brethren, for all the mind that was in Christ—for all the fullness of God.

"And now, may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the ever-

lasting covenant, make you perfect to do his will in every thing, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever."—AMEN.

SERMON XIII.

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF REV. HORACE FLETCHER, AS PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN TOWNSHEND, VT. JANUARY, 1844.

THE DESIGN, MEANS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

COLOSSIANS, I. 28—29.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

From that memorable day when our blessed Lord, about to ascend in triumph to the mediatorial throne, said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost . . . . . and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—the Christian ministry has been perpetuated in the world. A true succession in the sacred office has been preserved through every vicissitude which has happened to the churches of the faithful. I do not trace this succession

through the vaunted, but uncertain, and often deeply corrupted line of prelacy; on the contrary, I trace it through the line of holy men of succeeding ages, who, having first obtained a knowledge of salvation by grace in their own experience, have been specially called of God into the ministry of the gospel; who have maintained uncorrupted, and faithfully proclaimed the truth as it is in Jesus, and whose credentials divine have been read, in the holy fruit which their ministry has produced among men.

Such a ministry, my brethren, was at the first, and still is, the gift of Christ to the Church and the world. It is chosen by him from among the sons of men, specially qualified by his grace, and moved to the great work by the Holy Ghost. Its authority is received not from man, as descending from one to another in the line of office, but immediately from the great Head of the Church, the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls. In the customary examinations for ordination, we seek for evidence, in the candidate, of a renewed heart, of a pure and sound faith, of suitable qualifications for the sacred and responsible work, and of a divine call to it. This evidence gained, then, in the solemn services of ordination,he is received into the fellowship of a divinely called ministry, commended to the grace of God, and sent forth to the Church and to the world as an ambassador of Christ.

Such I suppose to be, in short, the theory of the ministry taught in the scriptures, and firmly held by the churches of our faith, over the world. May it still be held inviolate, till the Master shall return in glory to take account of his servants.

Our text was written by Paul, whose call to the min-

istry, in some respects, was extraordinary, and who was called to act a conspicuous part in the ministry of his day. It presents to us a concise and clear view of THE DESIGN, THE INSTRUMENTALITIES AND THE EFFICIENT POWER of the Christian ministry. To a consideration of these several points I design to call your attention on the present occasion. And O may the Spirit of grace rest upon us through all the solemn services before us!

I. Let us consider the design of our holy ministry.

It is the salvation of men. The ministry was instituted to effect, instrumentally, the same great end for which our blessed Lord came into the world. Of himself he said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Of him an apostle said, "He was made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." In pursuance of the design thus expressed, he offered himself without spot unto God, a ransom for the guilty and perishing race of man. On the third day he rose from the dead, having obtained eternal redemption for us. By this sacrifice, the way was opened for the sinner's return to God, for his pardon, renewal and eternal salvation. Now risen from the dead and about to ascend in glorious triumph to the mediatorial throne, he provided for the proclamation of the great salvation over the world, and through succeeding generations, by the institution of the ministry. In his presence were assembled his first chosen heralds. To them he spake, saying, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Acting under this high commission, an apostle said, "I became all things to all men, that by all means I might save some."

Here then, my brethren, we see for what end the ministry was ordained. Our race is in rebellion against God, alienated in their hearts from the life of God, and under just condemnation to everlasting punishment, in exclusion from God and from the glory of his power. But "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the business of the ministry to diffuse the knowledge of this salvation among their fellow-men, and seek to turn them from sin to God—to point them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and thus to save them from going down to hell, and raise them to a glorious inheritance of bliss in heaven. O, it is a great, a fearfully responsible, a glorious work! Contemplating it in connexion with the difficulties attending it, and the stupendous grandeur of its final results, an apostle exclaimed, "And who is sufficient for these things?" It is a work for eternity!

But it is important to notice the process through which the ultimate end of the ministry is effected in men. First of all, it must engage their attention. It must cause them to think upon the things connected with their spiritual being. It must fasten in their hearts a conviction of their relation and accountability to God, and of the utter sinfulness of their nature and exceeding guilt as rebels against their Maker, Preserver and rightful Sovereign. It must produce in them repentance toward God, a godly sorrow for sin, and hearty renunciation of it, as most abhorrent in its nature and ruinous in its

consequences. It must bring them to a cordial reception of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, begetting in them a true, confiding and living faith, through which alone they can receive remission of sins that are past, and come into the enjoyment of peace with God. It must effect a renovation of their moral nature, in which the body of sin being destroyed, they become partakers of the divine nature. As the fruit of all this, from henceforth they must have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Such, substantially, is the process through which fallen, guilty man must be rescued from the destruction to which he is exposed, and prepared for the perfect bliss of heaven. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord in peace. Within the gates of the holy city where God dwells, and where his full glory is seen and his bliss-inspiring smile is enjoyed, no polluted soul can enter. Men must be redeemed from sin and restored to holiness in their moral natures, or never participate in the joys of the saved before the throne of God.

Now, to effect this great change, and secure this glorious end in men, has been the appropriate concern of the Christian ministry, from the giving of the great commission to the present time. And such, my brethren, is our appropriate concern as ministers of the Lord Jesus. We should always contemplate our fellow-men in the light of the Bible. Our minds should always be impressed with a sense of their condition as sinners and candidates for eternity. And in all our studies, and in all our public labors, and in all our intercourse with them, it should be our controlling desire, our single and steady aim, to save them, to present them perfect in Christ Jesus at the judgment seat. O, how fearful to

stand in the relation of a Christian minister to men and to the judgment! Merciful Saviour, let thy Spirit guide, and thy grace sustain us!

II. Let us turn our attention to the instrumentality to be employed for the accomplishment of so important an end.

It is instruction in divine truth. "Go, teach all nations." Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel." Instruction is the prescribed work. Nor is the effect less plainly expressed: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." The instrumentality of divine truth, as taught by the ministry, in bringing men from sin to God, is, moreover, clearly represented in various places in the writings of the apostles. The saints to whom the apostle Peter wrote, had been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." St. Paul had begotten some to whom he wrote, "with the word of truth." And the gospel is called "the word of this salvation."

I shall not attempt to show any obvious tendency in the body of Christian truth to produce the change and secure the end which has been contemplated. I am willing to allow, that the accomplishment of so important an end through so simple an instrumentality, is a mystery surpassing the comprehension of human thought. Rather than attempt an explanation of the mystery, I would yield the full assent of an obedient faith to the assertion of an apostle—"When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"—and rejoice in the fact, that the

truths of our holy religion have been, and still continue to be, "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation."

To his work the Christian minister is perfectly furnished in the book of God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." From the book of God, therefore, the minister should furnish himself for his holy work. He needs no truth, for the accomplishment of his work, which is not found there; nor does the Bible contain truth which he does not need.

Allowing this to be a correct view of the subject, then the appropriate employment of the minister is plain: it is patient and toilsome study of the scriptures. Without such study, he can never take the clear and comprehensive view of the truths of our holy religion which is requisite to the safe and efficient instruction of his fellow-men. Without such study, he can never become "mighty in the scriptures," nor show himself "a workman, approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth." Thoroughly taught himself in the word of salvation, then he is to state, illustrate, defend and enforce it in all the range of its topics, in all its interesting relations, and in all its varied applications, in meekness, and patience, and affectionate earnestness. In the language of the text, he is to "teach every man in all wisdom." This he should do wherever opportunity may be presented, whether in the public congregation or in the social circle, or in the more private interview, or in the chamber of the sick, or in the house of affliction of any description. In a word, so far as it may be practicable,

he should strive to hold the minds of the people under the influence of divine truth, that they may become the objects of its renewing and transforming power.

The power of Christian truth upon the hearts of men has been witnessed, and excited the wonder of men, in every age of the Church. So mightily did the word of God prevail in the days of the apostles, that an apostle, when contemplating its efficiency in turning men from sin to God, could make his boast of its power. "I am not," said he, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God." Nor is it necessary to go back so far for examples of its conquests, when faithfully preached by devout and holy men. Baxter and Wesley and Brainerd and Payson and Pierce, and hosts of others who have gone to their final reward, in these last ages of the world, have won thousands to the wisdom of the just, by the faithful, and earnest, and patient proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus. And I may ask, Are there none who hear me now, who carry in their hearts deep and abiding impressions, received under the ministry of the lovely man* who so lately proclaimed the word of salvation from this place?

One point more is worthy of particular notice. Said the apostle, in the text, "Whom we preach," &c. It was Christ—Christ and him crucified. He preached Christ in his dignity, as equal with the Father, truly and properly divine—in his humiliation, as clothed with humanity, and making himself of no reputation, and suffering death for the sins of men—in his triumph, as risen from the dead, and exalted at the right hand

* Rev. Mr. Upham, late Pastor of the Church in Townshend.

of the Father—in his peculiar office, as Mediator between God and men—in the fullness of his grace, as willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him —in his authority, as the final Judge of quick and dead. It was this that gave such power to his ministry. So, now, my brethren, should Christ be preached. That preaching which does not exhibit Christ in his true nature, and relations, and offices, has no power to salvation. Christ, the Messiah of God, in his relations and offices, is the centre, the life and the glory of the whole Christian system.

Here, my brethren, is a work which must fill up the time, and put in requisition the best energies of any man. Sure I am, that no minister of Christ, who understands the nature and design of his work, and who is suitably impressed with his responsibility, can find time to engage in worldly speculations, or enlist in political strife and turmoil. He cannot do it, and not to a great extent defeat the designs of his high office. "Give thyself wholly to them," said an apostle to a junior minister, when speaking of the duties of his calling. Let the ministry be unentangled, unembarrassed with the affairs of this life, so far as it may be possible. Let those who are included in its ranks, live amid the manifestations of divine truth, and breathe, as in the conscious presence of the Lord of life and glory. Then will they witness the power of the gospel, and rejoice that they do not labor in vain.

III. We are to contemplate the power by which instruction in divine truth is rendered efficient in the salvation of men.

It is divine. It is the energy of the Spirit of God.

"Whereunto I labor," said Paul, "striving to his working, which worketh in me mightily." And again, the same apostle: "I have planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." And farther, the success of the gospel in Thessalonica was accounted for in the following words: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance." No one can fail to perceive in these passages the important sentiment, that it is the attending energy of the divine Spirit which renders the gospel effectual to salvation, by whomsoever it may be preached. Hence, however important the labors of the ministry in bringing men to the knowledge of the truth—to the obedience of faith—there is a sense in which every one who has come to know God and the power of divine grace, is the "workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Ministers proclaim, and illustrate, and enforce the sublime truths of the gospel: but the effective energy is of God. "God giveth the increase."

This is true, my brethren, not in the commencement of the work only, but through all its progress. Are Christians advancing, under the ministry of the gospel, in the knowledge of God, and becoming more and still more deeply imbued with the principles and spirit of our holy religion? Such advancement must be humbly and thankfully ascribed to him who, through the truth, worketh effectually in the heirs of salvation, "both to will and to do his own good pleasure." The ambassador of Christ, who has the high, the exquisite satisfaction of witnessing in his congregation a steady spiritual growth, evidence of the soundness of their faith and of their final salvation, may well adopt the language of the

amiable Wesley: "The best of all is, God is with us."

All this I suppose to be familiar, and, among evangelical Christians, universally acknowledged truth. But there is a view of it presented in the text, to which I would call your attention more particularly. I do not doubt that the truth, however spoken, or though it may be read in the Bible or elsewhere, may be, and often is, clothed with divine energy, and rendered effectual to the salvation of men. Incidents in the progress of Christianity fully establish this point. And yet, the preaching of the gospel by the living ministry is specially honored as the instrument of turning men to God, and securing the salvation of their souls. And there seems to be a marked connexion between the state of the preacher's own heart and the influence under which his mind labors, and success in his work. It is written of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, that, in the synagogue of the Jews, they "so spake, that a great multitude of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed." There was something in the men, and consequently in their manner, which brought the word home to their hearers with convincing and conquering power. Is not this accounted for in the text: "Whereunto I labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily"? Is it not plain, from this language of the apostle, that when he preached he was sensible of an energy more than human within him? It was this divine energy, with which they were inspired, that clothed the truth which fell from their lips—that arrested the attention of their hearers—that convinced them of the truth—that convicted them of sin, and subdued their hearts to Christ. God by the Holy Spirit was

with them—was in them—was in the word, rendering it quick and powerful to their salvation. Here is the secret of the success of holy men of God, through all succeeding ages to the present. It has not been by human might nor power, by human contrivance, or skill, or management, but by the Spirit of God, through the truth of our holy religion.

When I speak thus of the Spirit of God, as in, and working in, the ministers of Christ, I would not be understood to sympathize with some, who, claiming to be full of the Holy Ghost, give themselves to rash and extravagant action and speech; at the same time censuring those whose solemn sense of propriety and accountability to God constrain them to a more cautious and sober course, as cold-hearted and unfaithful in their work. No, my brethren; the Spirit of the God of order does not move men to such a course. For a single example of such extravagances as characterize the proceedings of some modern evangelists, you will search the records of apostolic labors in vain. In all their labors, the apostles were sober, and candid, and earnest, and grave. Under the mighty working of the Spirit in them, while their preaching was searching and powerfully convincing, it was characterized by no vulgarisms unseemly or offensive to the most refined taste. In their manner, then, let the ministers of Christ strive to follow those holy men who received their instruction from the great Teacher from heaven. Following them, though they may not see communities thrown into feverish commotion, they may nevertheless be cheered with evidence that the word of life, soberly, candidly and affectionately preached, is silently, but certainly and powerfully, working in the hearts of men to salva-

tion. The sentiment of Paul, touching this point, is concisely and clearly expressed in his second epistle to Timothy: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Is it asked how the Spirit affects and influences the Christian minister in his work? The answer is plain: he opens to his mind the awful and glorious realities of eternity, revealed in the Bible, giving a clear and affecting perception of the truths of the gospel. He inspires the mind with an energy to take a strong hold upon truth, in a manner, bringing down upon it the powers of the world to come; so that all is felt to be living, divine reality. Under his influence, the messenger of God is enabled to proclaim, with clearness and convincing energy, his message from heaven. This view of the subject is confirmed by the experience of the best and most successful of ministers. It is when they are most conscious of pervading divine influence, that they are most successful in their preparations for public labor. It is then that the truth opens to their perception in all its fullness and richness, with an assurance that is complete. It is then that they speak to men, as knowing and feeling what they utter. It is then that they are conscious of possessing power to move the hearts of men. Oh, my brethren, let us never be unmindful of this truth. Let us seek to be impressed with the truth, that all our sufficiency is of God, who only can make us "able ministers of the New Testament." O thou great Master, in whose name we come to our fallen fellow-men, let

thy word—"Without me, ye can do nothing"—be deeply impressed upon our hearts in all our labors.

But it is time for me to hasten to a close, and give place to others who are to participate in the solemn services of the occasion. In conclusion, therefore, my brethren, allow me to repeat: Ours is a great, a fearfully responsible, a glorious work. It is a continuation of a work commenced by the Son of God eighteen centuries ago. It has respect to the highest interests of our race for the present life, but more especially to their eternal well-being in the world to come. Faithfully prosecuted, it will not fail to produce results which will redound to the glory of our blessed Lord and Saviour, and enhance the aggregate of blessedness throughout an intelligent universe. Should we succeed in gaining the attention of some of our fellow-men; should the word of truth spoken by us be the means of fixing divine impressions in their minds; should those impressions, renewed from time to time, result in bringing them to the knowledge of Christ, and of uniting them to him by a living, divine faith; eternity alone could reveal the grandeur of the work, and the extent and measure of the blessedness resulting from it. O that we may be constantly impressed with a deep and affecting sense of all this! And may the Spirit of grace so rest upon and guide and sustain us in all our labors, that in the great day of accounts, we may be permitted to present before his throne a great company, perfect in Christ Jesus, as the fruit of our ministry.—AMEN.

SERMON XIV.

EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS, III. 8.

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

There are various kinds of knowledge, which are very desirable, for several reasons. In the first place, to him who attains to them, they are a source of high satisfaction—of great enjoyment. This is true of the knowledge of the sciences, and of history. He who is able, in consequence of his knowledge of science, to a great extent to explore the depths of nature, and trace the workings of her wonderful laws, is highly favored; he has access to sources of satisfaction and enjoyment of a high order. On his hands time need never hang heavily. In the products of infinite wisdom, the creations of infinite power and goodness, his mind may find ample scope for constant employment—employment most congenial and joy-inspiring.

Again: Some kinds of knowledge, whilst affording high satisfaction in the progress of acquirement, may be rendered subservient to important purposes of the present life. The truth of this statement is confirmed by facts within the knowledge of every careful observer of men and things. Hence it is not at all uncommon to hear persons, after having launched out upon the active scenes and pursuits of life, regret that they did not, in the proper season, give themselves more diligently to the acquisition of useful knowledge. This they do, because they see, and sensibly feel, the advantage possessed by others, their superiors in this respect.

And again: Knowledge, by the man who feels towards his fellow-men as every one should, may be employed for the good of his species. He who has made high attainments in the various branches of useful knowledge, and who is kindly and benevolently disposed toward his race, has truly enviable resources of good to his fellow-man. Dark as is the aspect of *fallen* humanity—and surely the view of it given by the pen of inspiration is of the deepest shade—it is pleasant to see some rays of light breaking in upon the general gloom. It is pleasant to contemplate some noble specimens of humanity, raised up out of the wide mass of general ruin, disdaining the low and debasing gratifications of the fallen multitude, reaching forth after the treasures of true knowledge, and having to some extent secured the object of their pursuits, employing those treasures for the elevation, the greatest good of mankind. Such specimens, to whatever cause we may be indebted for them, do appear to the great relief of the dark pages of the history of man.

The apostle, whose words I have read for considera-

tion, was not ignorant of the value of the various branches of knowledge sought and acquired by men. His own opportunities had been, for his day, of a high order, and his own attainments were above the ordinary attainments of his age. This is evident from the skill and power with which he defended and propagated the system of religion to which he at length devoted his life. The extent of his learning was acknowledged in the exclamation of Festus, when he plead his own cause before Agrippa: "Paul," said he, "thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." But, extensive as was the knowledge of the apostle, and numerous and important as were the advantages resulting from it before his conversion to the Christian religion, in that most important event he entered upon the acquisition of knowledge of an unspeakably higher order—a kind of knowledge which must be regarded as the crowning excellence of all knowledge. It was the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lord. In that event, God shined in his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In the openings of divine knowledge in the mysteries of Christ and his cross, his soul became completely captivated. Contemplating the immediate, the rapidly and widely extending fruits of this knowledge, together with the amazing treasures of its future and eternal glory, he regarded all that he had before known, as nothing in comparison with it. He was willing, though he had been known as among the most learned and honored among his nation, to sit at the feet of the humblest and most despised of Christ's followers, and learn from him the wonders of divine knowledge. Nor did he shrink from the reproach which for this cause might be heaped

upon him by his nation. Nay, he was willing, for the sake of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, whom now, in faith, he joyfully called his Lord, to suffer the loss of all things. His name, his standing among his brethren the Jews, and all the prospects of future distinction in his nation; all were cheerfully, joyfully sacrificed, for the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge hid in Christ Jesus. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Such, my brethren, was the estimation which the most learned of the apostles put upon the knowledge of Christ. And is that knowledge less important to us all? Is it not of surpassing importance to us all that we know Christ and the power of his resurrection? One fact, of universal prevalence, is sufficient to settle this point. Whatever men may know, short of the knowledge of Christ, there are times when they feel, painfully feel, the need of another kind of knowledge. Within every man, there is a nature to which mere human knowledge can furnish no permanent rest. But if we may credit the testimony of the apostle, and thousands besides, whose experience has qualified them to speak, this lack in human knowledge is abundantly supplied in the knowledge of Christ. Truly knowing Christ, their higher nature has found rest. In this knowledge, they rejoiced "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Let us, in the further contemplation of this subject,

consider what is embraced in the knowledge of Christ —wherein the excellency of this knowledge appears— from whence, and in what manner, it may be attained. And in doing this, may our souls be blessed with divine illumination, and enriched in the knowledge of salvation—the precious and glorious salvation of God.

I. What is embraced in the knowledge of Christ?

1. The great principles and doctrines which he taught. He sojourned among men in the character of a teacher, not of an ordinary class, giving instruction upon subjects already, to some extent, understood by the mass of men: but, he was altogether an extraordinary teacher. He spoke of subjects, and unfolded, illustrated, and enforced principles, beyond the ordinary vision of men. He spoke of God, the High and Holy One inhabiting eternity—of man as the creature of God's power—of man's relation to him and other creatures—of the duty of man to his Maker, and to his fellow creatures—of the fallen, guilty and perishing condition of the race of men—of the amazing love and compassion of God to man, in devising and revealing a plan for his salvation—of the various instrumentalities and means by which that wonderful plan is carried into effect—of the duty of men, in view of this gracious provision—of the points of danger at which they are liable to fail of salvation, notwithstanding the fullness and freeness of the provisions of grace—of a coming solemn and universal judgment, in the august proceedings of which, every man must pass a solemn test, and hear his own doom for eternal ages—of the holy, happy, thrice-blessed state of the saved, after the judgment, in the kingdom of their Father, from whence they shall

go no more out, forever and ever, and of the end, the fearfully dreadful end of the wicked, the finally disobedient and unbelieving, in the fire eternal, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Such were the subjects upon which Christ Jesus the Lord addressed men, while sojourning among them as a teacher come from God. And upon these subjects he spoke with great plainness, and simplicity, and power. "Never," said some who were sent to arrest him, "Never man spake like this man." Again: "they marvelled at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." And again it was said, "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which he spake." Now a perception and understanding of these great subjects, as forming a great system of doctrine, is comprehended in the knowledge of Christ.

2. In this sublime, and wonderful system of religion, Christ himself is the Alpha and Omega. Whilst unfolding to the understandings of those who sought to know the truth, the great things belonging to the future being of men, he presented himself to them as the fullness of the gospel. He appeared as the only begotten Son of God, given in the mighty workings of eternal justice toward a fallen world, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

He had come into the world that men "might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Summing all up in a word, he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Such were some of the teachings of Christ with respect to the place occupied by him in the gospel. Standing before the world in

such a light, occupying such a place in the great system of redemption, he often spoke to men in language of melting and winning invitation: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink:" "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Hence a perception of the Lord Jesus, in his relations, and offices, and works, as the centre, and life, and glory of all he taught, is comprehended in what the apostle styles "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Such was the view of the apostle. To him, Christ—Christ and him crucified—was an object of supreme love and adoration; an object of unbounded confidence. In him he beheld, with unutterable satisfaction, a glorious concentration of all divine truth, fully justifying his saying: "I am the truth." From him he saw light and life break forth in every direction, in brightest radiations, to cheer, to bless, and to save the fallen. Of all this we have most abundant evidence in all his recorded discourses and epistles. They are full of Christ. Christ is the glory of them all. It cannot be doubted, that the knowledge of Christ, in a manner, completely filled his mind and heart. Thus, my hearers, if you would attain to the knowledge spoken of in the text, must you know Christ. But,

3. The knowledge of Christ comprises, the impression of all this upon the heart.

This is what we call experimental knowledge. To a large measure of this knowledge, the apostle had attained. To the great doctrines of the Christian faith, he gave an unhesitating intellectual assent. To his

mind they were established by evidence of the most unquestionable kind, and ample amount. But this was not all: thus convinced, and yielding his heart to the influence of the truth, it became inwrought in his moral nature. Henceforth, with him the being and perfections of God, and all the other truths of the Christian system, were reality, of which he felt an inward, perfect and most blessed assurance. In this assurance, he could say: "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Short of this impression of divine things upon the heart, this writing of the great things of the kingdom of grace on the inner parts, no one has attained to the true knowledge of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Such, then, is the knowledge which the apostles esteemed as supremely excellent, for which he esteemed all else as lost, compared with which he counted all mere earthly treasures as dung and dross.

We will pass to notice,

II. Wherein the excellency of this knowledge consists.

1. It excels all other knowledge, as it meets, as no other knowledge does, the wants of our higher nature.

Whichever way we look, contemplating what are commonly called the works of nature, we can scarcely fail to be impressed with an overwhelming array of evidence, of the existence of an almighty and intelligent Creator. And whatever may be our attainments in the knowledge of the laws of nature, conscious of our own relation to that unseen, Omnipotent Being, we

cannot always be at rest, without the knowledge of him. Under the dominion of depravity, fallen man may turn away from his Creator,—may dread the knowledge of him; and yet, the capacity for knowing him is there, nor can that capacity be satisfied with any other knowledge.

Now in his various teachings Christ has revealed the Father unto men. And, in as many as open and yield their hearts to his word, God shines to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ." In this knowledge, the moral and spiritual nature finds a fullness, equal to its high capacities. Here the wants of that nature are fully met. Does man, as a moral being, hunger? Here is food in exhaustless measure. Does he thirst? Here is water, pure and ceaseless in its flowing from the fountain of life. In a word, here is the fullness of him who filleth all.

Again: The lower creatures of God in this world, the beasts of the field and of the forest, and the birds of the air, so far as we can see, are never the subjects of anxiety respecting a future life. No knowledge of a future life is essential to the highest satisfaction of which they are capable. Why is it so? My own impression is, that they are not immortal. They have not the high nature of moral and immortal beings. Hence they manifest no concern for a future life.

But with man, it is not thus. In him, there is a nature which reaches forth with anxious desire to know the future. Tell him that he is to live a few years, the subject of cares, of mingled joys and sorrows, and then lay himself down in an eternal sleep! The thought is revolting. Few indeed of all the race can force themselves to profess assent to it. Why is it thus

with man? The answer is plain. He has a nature that is immortal. As an immortal being, he cannot be perfectly happy except assured of eternal happiness. This point is clearly and forcibly illustrated by the circumstances attending the death of a heathen man. As mortal life was ebbing, he began to feel a mighty struggle within. The question that so agitated his soul was, "Where shall I go when I die?" This question, with great earnestness, he put to his priest, who told him he would inhabit another body. Upon this assurance, the dying man could rest but a moment. In imagination, that second existence was soon past, and the question rose, "Where shall I go when I die again." Paganism had no answer to give, save that already given. The anxious inquirer was told that he would live in yet another body, and so on through a long succession of existences. But with this answer the poor man could not rest satisfied. After a moment's reflection he exclaimed, "Where shall I go, last of all?" Here Pagan philosophy was put to the worse. For such an inquiry it had no answer. But here, where every thing else fails, the knowledge of Christ is all-sufficient. It fully meets the wants of the soul. It satisfies the deep cravings of immortality, and assures the humble believer of eternal life. "This," said Christ, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

2. I barely remark, in passing, that the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, is manifest in its effects upon society, where it prevails. Often have individuals, when brought under the influence of Christian knowledge, been manifestly elevated in their intellectual as well as moral character, and prepared for higher joys,

and more extensive usefulness. At the same time, it is, and must be conceded, that, the world over, we have the purest, and most elevated society, where the gospel in its purity is taught, and its truths and promises and hopes embraced. And in the end, the excellency of this knowledge will appear in the eternal salvation of all the millions who attain to it.

III. How may this knowledge be secured?

It is but a brief answer that I will now give. It must be, by a proper attention to the instructions of the sanctuary, and by the patient and persevering study of the divine scriptures. Here, we have the truth in all its fullness; and, if we will, we may possess ourselves of its amazing treasures—may enrich our hearts with its fullness. But, I remark once more, that in all our efforts to possess the treasures of divine knowledge, we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. He only, can quicken our perception, and enable us to know the things which God has prepared for us. Hence, in all our search for truth, in all our strivings for the knowledge of Christ, we should pray without ceasing, for the Spirit.

And now, my brethren, "May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,—and may the blessing of ALMIGHTY GOD, THE FATHER, AND THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST, be with you always. —AMEN.

SERMON XV.

MEN WILL REAP IN ETERNITY ACCORDING AS THEY SOW IN TIME.

GALATIANS VI. 8.

For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

In this world, one period of human life is preparatory to another, and each succeeding period is materially affected by that which precedes it. The period of childhood, properly directed, will introduce to a bright and happy youth. The days of youth, wisely employed and improved, seldom fail to conduct to useful and honorable manhood. And again, the days of vigorous and active manhood, spent in the ways of wisdom, are usually succeeded by a tranquil and peaceful old age. Thus, what man soweth in the earlier periods of his earthly existence, he usually reaps in those which follow. The truth of this statement is within the observation of all who will take the pains to observe.

And, my brethren, is it unreasonable to follow this train of thought still farther? Is it unreasonable to

suppose that the whole of this present life is preparatory to a future existence? Certainly, no conclusion can be more natural. Hence it is, that many among those upon whom the light of divine revelation has never shone, have thought of a life to come, and sought with anxious concern to gain some knowledge upon a subject so overwhelmingly important to them, and to all men.

But *we* are not left to rest our belief of so important a truth upon mere inference, however clear and sure. We have that most important of all books, in which God from eternity has spoken to men—in which life and immortality are revealed. Here we are taught in the plainest manner, that man, who in this world is of few days, is destined to exist beyond the bounds of time, and that his existence there will be unmeasured by the flight of years; that it will be of endless duration. Nor is this all. The teachings of this divine book make it certain that this life is preparatory to that which is to come. Hence, wherever the Bible comes to man, it points him to a future existence, and exhorts him to "labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life"—"to lay not up for himself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but to lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal"—to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," assuring him of all needful supplies of temporal blessings.

It was in view of this great truth, that our text was written. The apostle regarded this life as the spring-time of man's existence—as the seed-time for eternity. And he was perfectly assured that every man must

reap in the eternal world according to his sowing here. On this point, some may have been skeptical then, as some certainly are now. But he regarded them as the subjects of a dangerous self-delusion, and exhorted them against the fatal consequences of cherishing such delusion. With solemn emphasis, he wrote, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked—for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap:" "for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

This mortal frame of ours, my brethren, is a noble work of God. Well did an inspired man, when considering the various members of his natural body, in their perfectly arranged relations to each other, and in their adaptation to the important purposes of human life, exclaim, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" Thus fearfully and wonderfully is each one of us made. Wherever we go, however we may be employed, we always carry with us a living, wonderful volume of evidence of the being of an infinitely wise, all powerful and beneficent Creator and Preserver. This wonderful frame, in all its relations—in all its adaptations—in all its movements, proclaims a God, its Creator, Preserver and Benefactor.

But to what purpose was the human frame brought into being? It was reared up an earthly house, a tabernacle of clay, as the earthly dwelling place of the human soul. Through it, the soul holds all its relations to this material world, and its members are employed by the soul as instruments, subservient to its own pleasure. But for the corruption of the moral nature of man by sin, all these members, all the appetites and

susceptibilities of the human body, would have been employed as instruments of righteousness unto holiness; —all would have been made subservient to the great end of his being, the knowledge and enjoyment of God. Then every stream of creature comfort, realized by the soul through the medium of the bodily senses, would have been traced up to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift. In all these blessings, man would have been thrice blessed, in the ever present consciousness of the divine favor crowning them all, and in the assurance of that favor forever. Such would have been the subserviency of the bodily powers to the high ends of our moral nature, had that nature remained holy. But so it did not remain. Man, the most noble work of God under heaven—man, endowed by his Creator with powers which gave him a place scarcely below the angels, in the scale of being, and which, by a proper improvement, were destined to raise him to companionship with the great family of God in heaven—is an apostate from God. Sin has blighted and perverted his powers. His moral nature is alienated from God. And vainly does he plan, and toil and strive to join himself to some object equal to the capacity which infinite excellence alone can satisfy. Every where, fallen man toils for that which is not bread to his soul, and labors for that which satisfies not.

Here, my brethren, we may see what is meant by man's sowing to his flesh, and why it is that he does it. The soul, fallen from God, and cut off from all enjoyment of his sensible favor, no longer looks to him as the only source of true blessedness. It desires not the knowledge of him. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Henceforth it knows

no happiness that is not of this world. Hence, we see men every where planning, toiling, striving to multiply and enlarge their sources of creature enjoyment—of sensual gratification, to the total neglect of the higher pursuits of immortality. They sow to the flesh; for nothing of all that they so assiduously seek, can be retained or enjoyed, after their mortal flesh shall be laid in its last resting place. The rich man spoken of by our Lord, was sowing to his flesh, when, in view of his accumulating earthly stores, he resolved to take down his barns and enlarge them, that he might have where to store his goods, and then say to himself, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat drink, and take thine ease." But what said God to him? "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee. Then whose shall all these things be which thou hast provided?" Alas, how deep was this man's poverty, amidst all his wealth! He had carefully provided for the flesh, but not for his spirit in its future existence. Beyond this short and uncertain life he had no inheritance—nothing to enjoy.

And, my hearers, is it thus with you? Are your plans limited to mere creature enjoyments and gratifications? Can nothing of all you are seeking to gather, minister to your satisfaction and joy, when you shall leave the flesh, your mortal part, in the grave? What else are you doing, then, but sowing to your flesh? O turn not away from a solemn contemplation of the subject as it comes home to your own case, though it should convict you of the folly of having spent all your days, thus far, in sowing to the flesh; though it should convince you that you have no provision made for your well-being in that world without end, to which you are

rapidly hastening. Should you come to realize your true state and prospects for eternity, you might indeed feel alarmed at your folly thus far in life, and the view might occasion a disrelish for your too-long-cherished pleasures. But it is better that you should see these things in a true light now, before your seed-time for eternity is all gone—while you may yet sow to the spirit, and hope for a harvest unto eternal life.

But I must present another, humbling truth. Man, in this fallen state of slavery to the flesh, and of condemnation to divine wrath, is sunk below the reach of creature aid. All creature pity must be unavailing; all human power is too limited to reach his case. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then, and not till then, may fallen, polluted, sensual man, in his own strength, rise to spiritual life, and secure the blessed hope of eternal life in heaven. Help we all need, and must have, from on high, or reap the sad fruit of our folly in the last great harvest.

But, my brethren, everlasting thanks to God, the help which we need is provided, and freely proffered. Between man and his offended God and Sovereign, there stands a days-man, Jesus Christ the Mediator. He is the Son of God, and the partner of his throne—one with him in being, and in love, and in all the great interests of universal and eternal dominion. And yet, born of the Virgin Mary, he became incarnate, clothed in human nature, made under the law. Thus he became one with man, in affection and in interest. Prompted by love to the suffering, perishing race to whom he had thus mysteriously united himself, he met the claims of divine justice in their behalf. For us he laid down his life, by the grace of God tasting death for every man;

a spotless victim, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, and in merit fully equal to the demands of divine justice, and the honor of the divine government. Though for our sakes he laid himself down in death, and felt the power of the last enemy, yet it was not possible that he should be holden of that power. Through the almighty energy of the eternal Spirit, he was raised up from the dead. And now, he who was dead is alive, and behold, he liveth forever more, one in being, in love and in interest, with the Eternal Father, clothed in our nature, and one with us in sympathy and in love. and stands as our only Mediator before the eternal throne. For us he intercedes—

> "*Five bleeding wounds he bears,*
> *Received on Calvary;*
> *They pour effectual prayers,*
> *That strongly speak for us.*"

And the promise which he made to his disciples while he was yet a sojourner among men, has been fulfilled: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth." The Spirit of truth has been given. He is now in the world. In every Christian land, many a happy Christian can say,

> "My soul a witness is."

In every place of secret devotion—in every Christian convocation for prayer—in every place of more public worship—in all the heaven-appointed means of grace, he is present, enlightening, confirming and sanctifying the elect of God, and inspiring them with faith and divine comfort. And while the saints continue to walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, those without are almost certain to feel, more or less, the movings of divine influence. How often have

individual minds become solemn, while their thoughts have been turned in a new direction. The transient nature of all earthly possessions and pleasures; the shortness of time, the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death; the entrance of the soul into the presence of God, and upon its eternal existence, and the want of preparation for that important, awful change, have been impressed upon the mind. Thus impressed, and conscious of guilt, and of just exposure to the wrath of God, thousands have been, in a manner, pressed to make the momentous inquiry, "*What shall I do to be saved?*"

Now from whence is this awe, this solemn sense of the vanity of earthly treasures and enjoyments—these deep impressions of eternal things—this conviction of sin, and concern for the future state of the soul? This is a state of mind which mere human reasoning and human appeals have failed to produce—which they never can produce: it is produced by the Spirit of truth, whose office it is to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The person who is thus *impressed*, is under conviction by the Holy Ghost. With him, the third person in the ever blessed Trinity is striving, through the intercession and mediation of the Son of God, according to the gracious purpose of the everlasting Father. Upon him, the mind of the infinite Godhead is resting, and toward him, in love, his power is directed; and the end toward which that attention and power are directed, is his eternal salvation.

O, is there a convicted person in this congregation? To such an one I would speak in the most solemn and affectionate manner. Think, O think of what love

you are now an object! Think what power is now moving upon you, and for what end! God is now following you in love. His gracious power is now moving you to turn from sin, and enter upon the great work of sowing to the spirit. The present, with you, is a time of the most serious importance. Now, you are surrounded by those divine influences, which, if not resisted—which, if cordially yielded to and improved, will not fail to lead you into the path of life. Yielding to your present divine impressions, you will henceforth sow to the spirit, and at last reap life everlasting, as the harvest. But, should you neglect or resist the gracious impressions, which God, in the plenitude of his mercy, is making upon you, they may all pass away to return no more. Dying hearer, wo unto you when God shall thus depart from you! O, I beseech you, while God is near, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

But it is time to call your minds back to the text—of which, in all these apparent digressions, I have not lost sight. Now when men feel the impressions which I have attempted to describe; when, yielding to the inclinings of the Spirit of God, they look beyond the cares and the pleasures of time, to the interests of the soul for eternity; when it becomes their first concern, their most anxious care, to lay up a treasure in heaven, to gain the knowledge and love of God; when, with every returning day, in all the divinely appointed means of grace, they steadfastly and earnestly seek those things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, ever pressing, in spirit, toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; when, in all their cares, and in all their toils, they are more

concerned to secure eternal salvation, and glorify God, than to be rich, or great, or honored in the sight of men, they sow to the spirit;—they have the well-being of their souls in view, and are acting according to the promptings of the divine Spirit, who is sent to lead them in the way of life.

There is yet one point more to which I must call your attention before I close. It is, the harvest which men will reap from what they sow in this life. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. Solemn declaration, and no less manifestly true than solemn. What else can he reap, in the end, who spends his life in ministering only to the gratification of his lower nature, neglecting, totally, the wants of that higher nature, whose powers, if cultivated, would raise him to the blessedness of companionship among the angels of God? Who does not know that the unrestrained gratification of the fleshly appetites is sure to bring upon man a complication of evils, even in the present life, which render existence unspeakably miserable! Who does not know, that multitudes, by unrestrained indulgence, are cutting their lives short by many years! For a moment contemplate the victim of sensual indulgence, as he begins to feel the consequences of his indulgence. Now his propensities, too long cherished and wickedly indulged, become the instruments of his torture. Upon nothing can he look back with satisfaction; for his life has been passed in sin, in carnal indulgence. Nor, as he approaches the confines of the grave, is he cheered by any prospect of future good. For eternity he has taken no thought; for it he has made no preparation. From that quarter no ray of hope shines to cheer him. All before him is

dark as darkness itself. His cherished pleasures forever gone, he turns with dismay and horror from his approaching doom, with a fearful looking for of the blackness of darkness forever. This, my friends, all this, is the fruit gathered from a life spent in sowing to the flesh. And is not this reaping corruption? Oh, what a harvest for eternity! Merciful Saviour, pity us in our fallen condition, and save us from the folly, the madness, of sowing to the flesh!

But "He that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

Here let us contemplate the Christian, as he sows to the spirit. From his heart, he has renounced the world. With a perception of its fullness and glory, he has embraced the gospel, and yielded his heart to its control. In his heart, the love of God has been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. To his mental vision, the future home of the saints, in the brightness of its glory, has been opened. Confiding in the merits of atoning blood, he feels the energy of a living, divine hope. He rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Prompted by these influences, he is striving to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. As he has opportunity, he is striving to do good unto all men. He is pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In a word, it is not to the flesh, but to the spirit, that he lives and sows. He has his fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Now, as such a man approaches the end of mortal life, he has peace and joy within, unknown to the devotees of sensual pleasure. He does not leave his dearest joys behind. His brightest joys—joys of which he has

an earnest here, an inheritance in the future. His treasure is above. And, my brethren, how fully has many a happy soul been swallowed up in the prospects which open upon his spiritual vision, as mortal life recedes! This is reaping life everlasting!

And now, my friends, something of time remains to you: but how much, or how little, no one but God knows. How will you spend the remnant of mortal life that may yet remain to you? You have seen, in the progress of this discourse, what it is to sow to the flesh, and what must be the everlasting harvest. Will you yield yourselves to carnal pleasure? Will you fill up your remaining days in sowing to your flesh? Ah, think of the harvest which you soon must reap! Think of the end of those who have pursued this course before you.

> "Oh, their end, their dreadful end!
> Thy sanctuary taught me so;
> On slippery rocks I see them stand,
> And fiery billows roll below!"

Oh no, my friends, you will not, *you cannot*, decide thus to spend your days. Imploring aid from on high, in this moment renounce the world, and decide henceforth to live and sow to the spirit. And to this may God incline you by his Spirit!—AMEN.

SERMON XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S VOWS.

PSALM CXVI. 14—18.

I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people.

The saints of old, were sometimes favored with cheering manifestations of the divine presence and glory. God, the infinite Author of all being, and the source of all blessedness, came near to them, and impressed them with a sense, an awful and yet joyful sense, of his own being, and goodness, and glory. Under these impressions—wrapped in the contemplation of his infinity of excellence, and swallowed up in his love, they could not but yield to the powerful constrainings of his love, and devote their own being to him, as a willing and joyful offering. And, my brethren, truly blessed, unspeakably happy were they, when, amid such manifestations and under such impressions, they could say, Lord we are thine—forever thine, the objects of thy love,

of thy care, and of all the profusion of blessings flowing from thine eternal fullness!

What is more natural, than that creatures thus blessed, should, from the overflowing of their hearts, vow unceasing fidelity to their glorious Lord and Sovereign? Such vows made under such manifestations and impressions, we know were frequent among holy men of old. Such vows, David had made. He had made them repeatedly. He had made them in the deepest sincerity of his soul.

But human nature is weak and erring. Even good men—men to whom God has manifested himself in mercy—in whom he has begun the work of grace, and to whom he looks as the future subjects of his everlasting kingdom in heaven, may, yes, have, often erred. Through the influence of earthly objects, sometimes of the artful and strong temptations of Satan, they have fallen into spiritual darkness—have lost the sensible impression of the divine presence and glory, and failed to perform the vows which, in more favored seasons, they had made to the Lord. Of this we have evidence in the melancholy fall of the king of Israel. The nature of his fall, you know. To describe it particularly, therefore, is unnecessary.

But, my brethren, grievous as was his sin, and melancholy as was his fall from the divine favor, there was a spirit within him which insured his repentance. Within him was a new nature, which could not but feel the deepest grief and remorse when he came to contemplate his sin. The nature and depth of his sorrow, of the anguish of his spirit, may be perceived in his own language:—"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me." For a

time, he was shut up in darkness. Despair seemed to hedge him in on every side. But in this horrible pit he was not left to die. The remembrance of former mercies of the Lord visited him, and encouraged him to call upon the name of the Lord. "Then"—said he—"Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." And he added, "The Lord is gracious and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple. I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee; for thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Thus was David restored to a sense of the divine favor—to the joy of God's salvation. It was at this favored season, when in the full consciousness of the divine goodness and mercy, with a heart overflowing with gratitude and love, that he consecrated himself to God anew, in several pious resolutions: "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living"—"I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord"—"I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people; in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem."

And can all this have an appropriate application to Christians of this day? Yes, my brethren, it can. Repentance and true piety, in all its workings, in all its manifestations, is substantially the same in every age. The soul that is humbled before God, and truly penitent to-day, can find no language better adapted to express what he feels, than is found in the plaintive strains of the humble and penitent king of Israel, breathed out before God centuries ago. Nor can he whose heart is

sweetly subdued under a sense of God's forgiving love and saving grace, better express his blissful emotions, than in the language of praise and thanksgiving, in which the same distinguished servant of God was wont to praise his forgiving Lord.

The text read for consideration, suggests some points of sympathy, or fellowship, known and felt by the pious of every age. They have all vowed unto the Lord, and they all, in seasons of merciful visitation, are prompted to pay those vows.

I. The truly pious of every age have vowed unto the Lord.

There may be instances in which the principles of true religion are so early impressed upon the heart, and inwrought into the moral nature by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the subjects of the blessed work can never afterward speak with assurance of any particular time in which they were renewed. All they can say, is, that they love the Lord Jesus Christ, and feel to confide in him as their Saviour; while they rejoice in the consecration of their all to him. But this is not applicable to the generality of Christians. The great majority of Christians can look back to a time when they were in darkness—when their minds were blinded by the god of this world—when they had no sensible impression of divine things—when they were wholly under the influence of things on the earth, "having no hope, and without God in the world." They can call to mind, moreover, the time and the circumstances in which, by some means, their minds became impressed with an awe of God, and a painful sense of guilt in having violated their reasonable obligations to him—

when they were brought, as by some mysterious power, working upon their hearts, to feel and tremble under a sense of exposure to the just wrath of him, who, from the throne of the universe, beholds all that is done upon the earth, and will finally bring every work into judgment, with every secret thought, whether it be good or bad.

And at this point, what numbers can call to mind a most painful struggle. Did they seek to atone for their countless and most aggravating sins, how could they do it? They had no price to bring, no offering to make. Nor could their tears avail, or their sighs of deepest anguish and remorse. All could not atone for sin. Did they think to escape their fearful doom by future amendment? Soon the delusive hope was blasted by resistless conviction of the entire depravity of their moral nature. For now they saw and felt, that, back of every known violation of the divine law, every act of sin of which they had been guilty, was a deeply corrupted moral nature. Now they felt the force of the divine word: "Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil, and that continually." Now they saw that their own hearts answered to the apostle's word, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." In a word, they felt themselves *lost—lost* beyond recovery by any creature skill or power. This, my brethren, is the wormwood and the gall, the horrible pit, and the miry clay, which the Christian cannot cease to remember with deep humility and self-abasement, while life shall last.

But, thanks be unto God, the point at which we have just contemplated the sinner, is the point of his deliverance. Said Christ, in the days of his flesh, "The Son of man is

come to seek and to save that which is lost." It is, therefore, when man *feels that he is lost*, in himself undone forever, that Jesus, the mighty, the compassionate Saviour, appears for his rescue. And to the soul lying thus at the very gate of death, how welcome, how precious beyond all human expression, is the rising light of salvation, perceived, it may be, in opening passages of God's word! Is it the language of the apostle, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," that arrests his attention, and opens upon his enlightened understanding? In that word he perceives hope for himself; for, though feeling himself to be among the chief of sinners, there is hope for such. Or, is his mind directed to the sublime passage of our Lord's teaching, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" What can he ask more? "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life!" Here, then, is an assurance which reaches his case. This, when the Holy Spirit shines in his heart, he perceives: and as the plan of salvation, through the mediation and atonement of Christ the Son of God, in all its unsearchable depths of wisdom—in all its fullness and sufficiency for the most fallen and miserable, opens upon his mind; sweetly, powerfully constrained, he falls in with the plan. He sinks, as it were, all helpless, and ill-deserving in himself, into the hands of him who is mighty to save, and finds himself merged in the eternal covenant of redemption. Now looking up to God through Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of man, the only mediator between God and man,

he can adopt the language of the psalmist—"The Lord hath heard my voice and my supplication"—"He hath inclined his ear unto me"—"Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling, and mine eyes from tears." Or, in the language of an apostle, he can say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: Beloved, now are we the sons of God." He feels himself a child of God. He is assured by the certain and clear witness of the Spirit, of the full and free pardon of his sins, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Fully confiding in Jesus, sweeetly reposing in divine love, he feels the peace of God which passeth understanding, pervading his whole soul.

My brethren, what a moment is this to man! Here he begins to live, as he never lived before. Henceforth, as a being possessed of a moral and spiritual nature, he has meat to eat that the world knows not of—of which, till now, he has had no just notions. Henceforth, he perceives a depth and blessedness of meaning in the divine word, which never before was conceived by him. From this point, received and owned as a child of God, an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, his destination is heavenward. From this point, believing in Jesus, whom, though he has not seen, he loves, he rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

It is here, my brethren, that men, from the deepest promptings of their hearts, vow unto the Lord. And what are the vows made unto the Lord amid circumstances so solemn and yet joyful?

It is sin that has brought such distress and misery upon them, that has well nigh ruined them forever.

This, therefore, they deplore, and in their vows, they renounce it forever. It is a vow of every Christian, as he casts himself upon the saving mercy of God, "I will no more knowingly and willingly offend my God by sin." It is the favor of God, enjoyed through the mediation and atonement of Christ, that fills the Christian soul with acomfort and peace which passes understanding; and it is a Christian's vow, ever to seek his joy in that favor, renouncing every thing inconsistent with it. Every earthly pursuit, every amusement, every source of creature pleasure, which may grieve his heavenly Father, and interrupt his enjoyment of the divine favor, in solemn covenant is renounced.

Again: In view of the infinite perfections of the Lord Jehovah, and especially of his condescending love and mercy to his lost and perishing soul, the Christian cannot but feel the strongest possible sense of obligation to devote himself and his all to the service of God. And in a solemn vow of consecration he does devote himself to God. There is no Christian heart, which has not felt what is expressed in the beautiful lines of Watts,

"But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do."

And again:

"Here in thy courts, I leave my vow,
And thy rich grace record;
Witness ye saints who hear me now,
If I forsake the Lord."

But let us glance—

II. To another point of sympathy between Christians, touched in the text. It is the renewal of these vows, the resolution to enter anew upon their more zealous and constant performance.

Such are the circumstances and influences through which Christians must for the most part pass to their final home in heaven, that without constant watchfulness, and care, and trust in God, they will become perplexed, and in their hearts diverted from the one end which they have resolved to pursue. Of this we have evidence in the grief, and repentance, and confessions of thousands, who on the whole must be regarded as pious. Nay; have we not evidence of it in our own experience, my brethren? Have we never for a time lost sight of the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ? Here we never had occasion to mourn our absence from the God we love, and deplore the instability of our ways? Few, I am persuaded, can do less than acknowledge it. Even David knew the bitterness of such experience, and called upon his soul to return unto the Lord, his rest and his portion. Christians in the days of the apostles were charged with a departure from their first love, and solemnly admonished to repent.

But when David become sensible of his decline, he rested not. He betook himself to solemn and earnest prayer: "O Lord," he cried, "I beseech thee, deliver my soul." Nor did he thus pray in vain. The Lord, who is of tender mercy, hearkened unto his prayer and appeared for his deliverance. Soon was the penitent servant of God restored unto the joys of salvation. Then, remembering his former vows, he resolved, and devoted himself anew to their performance. "I will

pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem."

And here, brethren, is the true course for us. Have we, for a time, forgotten our vows? Have our hearts been turned away from the Lord? Have we declined in the ardor of our love to God, whose mercy was revealed for our salvation, and have we fallen from the joy of salvation, and groped our way in spiritual darkness? One, and only one, right and safe course remains for us. It is, without delay, to return unto the Lord, with confession and sorrow of heart for all our backslidings. It is, to call to mind our solemn vows, made when humbled before the throne of mercy. Jesus came to our rescue, spake our sins forgiven, and raised us up together, to the enjoyment of God's favor, and the blessed hope of eternal life in the world to come.

And now, my brethren, I solemly ask, Can you delay to do it? Let me, in love, and I trust, in the Spirit of our God and Saviour, come near to each one, as though addressing him personally. My beloved friend, has God called thee out of darkness into marvellous light? Has he spoken peace to thy troubled heart? Has he breathed the spirit of faith, of love, of hope, into thy heart? Has he raised thee from thy deep spiritual poverty, to an heirship with Christ and all the redeemed—an heirship to an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"? In the full and blessed consciousness of all this, didst thou give thyself to the Lord, in an everlasting covenant, vowing to renounce the world in its vain pomp and show, and to devote yourself, in all your cares, in all your labors, in all your enjoyments, and in all your hopes, to his

service, and to his glory? That covenant, those solemn vows, are recorded on high. They can never be erased. They will stand there till the great day of accounts. In that day you will meet them. O canst thou, professing Christian, canst thou be forgetful of them? Canst thou be unfaithful to them? O no: I will not believe it. Here, in this consecrated place, in remembrance of all God's mercy to thee, let thy solemn vows be again renewed. Let thy heart adopt the language of the text, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord."—AMEN.

SERMON XVII.

THE SABBATH A BLESSING TO MAN.

ISAIAH LVI. 2.

Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

THE Sabbath is an institution of the highest antiquity. It was hallowed and given to man at the close of the work of creation. (Genesis ii. 2—3.) "And on the seventh day, God ended the work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because, that in it he had rested from all his work which he had created and made." Of this divine institution, frequent mention is made in the history of God's ancient people. During their sojourn in the wilderness, it was named and honored by Jehovah himself, who on the sixth day, gave to his people a double portion of manna, and preserved it from putrefaction, that there should be no gatherings on the Sabbath. When the law was given upon Mount Sinai,

the Sabbath was remembered, and guarded by the high authority of heaven. The same Power that said, Thou shalt not steal—thou shalt not covet—thou shalt not bear false witness, &c., said also: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." In the time of Nehemiah, the profanation of the Sabbath, was mentioned as a procuring cause of the wrath which rested upon Judah. "In those days," said Nehemiah, "I saw in Judah, some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also, wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens which they brought into Jerusalem, on the Sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath.

In the text and context, the keeping of the Sabbath is classed with the keeping of judgment, and doing of justice; and upon him who keepeth it, a blessing is pronounced. "Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."

Coming down to the time of our Lord's ministry upon earth—turning our attention to the inspired nar-

ratives of that ministry, we still find frequent mention of the institution under consideration. It is true, that the careful reader of the gospels will see some venerable rites and observances passing away. This is true of those typical observances and rites which pointed to the coming of Messiah, and the great events of his life, upon which rest the hopes of the pious of all ages. But of the Sabbath, not a word was uttered indicating its abrogation. Had it been among the things which were passing away with the ushering in of the gospel dispensation, surely our Lord would have given some intimation of it. He was repeatedly accused of violating the day, in the works of mercy which he performed on the suffering, and a similar charge was brought to him against his disciples, who in passing on the Sabbath, had plucked corn, with which to satisfy the demands of nature. From these charges, Jesus defended both himself and his disciples, not by asserting that the Sabbath was passing away, and that men were no longer under obligation to observe it; but by maintaining that the things complained of were no violations of the day. Nay, so far was our Lord from intimating the discontinuance of the institution, that he asserted its perpetuity in language most unequivocal. Said he, "The son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." To my mind, this was nothing less than a declaration of the incorporation of the Sabbath with the institutions of the gospel. Of the Christian dispensation, with the ordinances peculiar to it, Christ is pre-eminently Lord. When he said, "The son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath," it was in effect to place that ancient institution among others of the gospel. Again, said he, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the

Sabbath." The Sabbath was made for man; not for the Jews only—not for any particular race of men—not for the men of any particular age, but for man;—for the whole family of man. Scarcely could its perpetuity have been more clearly expressed.

We have thus traced the Sabbath down through succeeding ages, from the completion of the work of creation, to the dawn of the Christian dispensation, when we find it clearly recognized, and given to the world by the blessed Saviour, the King of Zion, who is head over all things to the Church. The Christian, therefore, may receive it as among the blessings and privileges of the Christian dispensation—designed for his spiritual improvement as a Christian.

At this point, however, it may be important to glance at an interesting fact in the history of the Sabbath. I allude to its change from the seventh to the first day of the week. In some minds, the question may arise, By what authority has the divine institution been transferred to the first day of the week?

For this transfer, there are obvious and satisfactory reasons. When the seventh day was selected and sanctified, the reason assigned for the selection, was, that "in it God rested from all his works." It was the first day that dawned upon a finished creation. But vast and glorious as was the work of creation, it is exceeded by the work of redemption. Was the seventh day the first that dawned on a lovely, a finished creation? the first day of the week, was the first that dawned upon *a risen, conquering Saviour*, the first that shed its light upon this fallen world after the breaking of the sceptre of the Prince of darkness, and opening up the path of life to men. On that day, how glorious was the rest of

the Prince of peace! Long had he toiled in this dark world, oppressed with grief, and borne down with overwhelming sorrow. Of the cup of suffering given him by the Father, he had drunk to its bitterest dregs. He had undergone a dreadful baptism of sufferings. He had been down into the regions of darkness and death, and grappled with him who had the power of death; and from thence he had come up in the majesty of his own omnipotence, gloriously victorious. On that glorious morning—that *memorable first day*, as he surveyed the past, from all the suffering of his sojourn among men—the reproach—the spirit anguish—the fearful conflicts of the garden—the judgment-hall—the cross, he rested. From that blessed morning, as he contemplated the future, his spirit sweetly reposed in the certain prospect of the eternal salvation of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of the fallen, perishing race of man. In view of this, what could be more suitable than that the day should henceforth be hallowed, and called, as it was by the Spirit, *The Lord's Day?*

But the manifest propriety of such an observance of the day—of a transfer of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first, is not the only ground of the prevalent practice of Christians touching this point. For a practice so obviously proper, we have the authority of the example of men divinely inspired. The apostles must have known the mind of Christ on this subject. Nor can we doubt that, infallibly directed as they were, in their teachings and practice they acted according to the will of Christ in this particular. In their practice, therefore, we have the will of our Lord.

What then was their practice? They observed the

first day of the week, as a day devoted to the worship of the Lord, and called it, hence, "*The Lord's Day.*" In confirmation of this statement, I will present two or three passages of scripture.

1. From a careful examination of Acts xx. 6—7, it appears that St. Paul, in the prosecution of his ministry, arrived at Troas on Tuesday: and yet, it was not until the next first day that he met with the disciples to break bread and preach to them. Again, (1 Corinthians xvi. 1—2.) "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." Now from this passage of scripture, it appears that the apostle had already given order to the churches of Galatia to take collections upon the first day of the week, for the relief of the suffering saints at Jerusalem; and now he was giving a similar order to the church in Corinth. That it was a collection here ordered, is plain from the reason assigned for it by the apostle: "That there be no gatherings when I come."

It is, then, perfectly evident that the brethren in Troas, that the church in Corinth, and that the churches in Galatia, were accustomed to assemble on the first day of the week for worship. Nor is there any room for doubt, that a custom, known to be so general, under the teachings of inspired men, was the custom of all the churches of Christ in the days of the

apostles, nor that it was according to the known will of the Lord and King in Zion.

I will not detain you with quotations from the early Christian Fathers, whose writings show conclusively that the practice of the apostles, and of the churches planted by them, was continued without question in succeeding churches. I will add, only, that to my mind, the evidence adduced in favor of the sanctification of the first day of the week, as the Lord's day, or Christian Sabbath, is amply sufficient. In view of it, I cannot see room to doubt that it is the will of our blessed Lord that it should be so sanctified. And I am free to say, that with an equal amount of the same kind of evidence, I could not hesitate to receive and practice any rite which might be presented to me as divine.

It may possibly be asked, How does the fourth command apply to what we term the Lord's day, or Christian Sabbath? In answer, I remark: Under the former dispensation, the seventh day was clearly pointed out as the day to be hallowed. Hence, by the authority of heaven, the sanctification of that day was enjoined. But under the present dispensation, the finger of God as plainly points to the first day of the week, as the consecrated day. To that day, therefore, the command, still in force, refers.

Here I leave this part of the subject; and let us pass to consider the institution of the Sabbath, as a blessing to those who keep it. Our text pronounces the Sabbath-keeper blessed. "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it;—that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."

I. The Sabbath, considered as a regularly returning season of rest from labor, properly kept, is a great blessing to man.

It will be conceded by all, that relaxation from the cares and toils of life, is quite essential to the health and highest enjoyment of man. This necessity is often sensibly felt by men in the various callings of life. And yet, the various interests of men in this life are so interwoven and linked together, as to render a general provision for it, by divine authority, entirely essential. Suppose it was left to each individual to choose and arrange his own days of rest, how many thousands are so dependent upon others that they would be doomed to perpetual toil, till nature, crushed and worn, would be no longer capable of toil! Or suppose it was left to man, by conventional arrangement, to provide for this obvious necessity of our physical nature? What is more evident, than that any arrangement which might thus be made would prove a failure? The interests of men might lead them to differ widely, as to the frequency of the season of rest. And such is the selfishness of man, that nothing short of divine authority, could ever secure to the mass of men so great a blessing.

We have, therefore, occasion for devout gratitude to God, that he has provided for the wants of his creatures in this respect. He has enjoined it upon all, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Now was the appointment of our heavenly Father strictly regarded throughout the land, on the eve of the Lord's day we should see the whole community, dismissing their worldly cares, suspending the various branches of their business, and preparing for the approaching season of

rest. On the day of heaven's appointment, no noise and confusion of business or amusements would disturb the universal quiet reigning among men. And the rest of the Sabbath past, the multitudes would return to their usual employment, refreshed both in body and mind, and prepared to engage with more certain success in every righteous enterprise.

That the Sabbath, thus kept, is a great blessing to men, is evident from a comparison between communities where it is reverenced and sacredly kept, and those where it is generally desecrated. Where do we find the most healthful and flourishing communities? Certainly, not where the the Sabbath and other divine institutions are neglected and desecrated. On such communities, find them where you will, and surrounded by whatever advantages of country and locality, a blight seems to rest. But go where the institutions of our holy religion are respected and observed—go where the Sabbath is hallowed by the mass of the people, and you will find there a sound and healthful state of society—you will find there the best of prosperity. On this subject I speak advisedly. I have seen the contrast of which I speak, and have been deeply impressed in view of it. In it we cannot but perceive both the wisdom and goodness of God. It strikingly shows the adaptation of the institutions of our holy religion to the condition and wants of men everywhere. And of no divine institution is this more manifestly true, than of the Sabbath. Surely the blessing of God rests upon the Sabbath-keeper, and upon the Sabbath-keeping community.

II. The Sabbath, considered in its influence upon

the moral and social condition of man, is a great blessing.

How perfectly apparent it is, that by nature there is something wrong in man. This is confirmed by the history of all past ages, and by our own knowledge of the present condition of the human family. Men who ought to love each other as brethren, children of the same benevolent parent, have been arrayed against each other, in angry debate, in bitter contentions, and often in deadly combat. What millions of our race have fallen by the hands of their brethren, in ages past! Upon what envy, and malice, and wrath, and bitter hatred, and unholy strife, and deceiving, and overreaching, and oppression, and wrong of every description, does the eye of a holy God now look down from day to day! And how vain must be any attempt to portray the misery which human beings are now suffering in consequence of all this wickedness! Such a state of things is never seen among holy beings. On the contrary, among holy beings, peace, and order, and blessedness reign uninterrupted. The conviction, therefore, forces itself upon the mind of every careful observer, that man is wrong. His heart is not right, and hence, all his relations are deranged, and hence, many things designed as blessings to him by his heavenly Father, by his own preverseness are turned to a curse.

For all these moral maladies—these appalling miseries of the human family, there is but one remedy. That remedy is found in the religion of the gospel. In proportion as the principles of the gospel are understood and received, and in proportion as their influence is felt, the moral disorders of human society disappear.

and moral order ensues. And could we see a community living under the full and constant control of the sublime and holy principles of the Christian religion, we should there see the beauty of perfect moral health and order. What, then, can be more important to man, than the general diffusion of the truths of the gospel? What is more important to us as moral and social beings, than that we should experience in our moral nature, the renewing power—the moulding influence of those truths.

Now the regular return of the Lord's day, furnishes to all classes an opportunity to come under the influence of divine truth. Was the Sabbath of our Lord suitably reverenced, and properly kept, we should see the mass of the community, with their backs turned upon the business of the world, and their minds freed from its numerous and perplexing cares, on each succeeding holy day, gathering within the gates of Zion. There would they listen to the word of divine truth, and feel its awakening and quickening power. Nor can we doubt what would be the result. It would be an unceasingly clear perception of their relations to God, and to their fellow men, and by the blessing of God, a growing disposition, a fuller determination to discharge the various and interesting obligations growing out of those relations.

My brethren, imperfectly as the Lord's day is kept, and wickedly as it is desecrated by multitudes, even in the most favored Christian lands, there are communities where the blessed influence of the day, upon the moral and social condition of the people is perfectly manifest. Where, I ask, as a general thing, do we find the most orderly, peaceful and obliging communities? Fearless of contradiction from any who are properly informed.

I answer, it is where the Sabbath is hallowed by the people. It is where the mass of the people, young and old, dismissing worldly cares, and turning away from secular employments, regularly resort to the sanctuary, and keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord. To such a people, the prophecy will apply with force, "Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord."

True, my brethren, in this respect there is much in our own favored land to deplore. In this favored portion of the world, there is much Sabbath desecration. Over too many, alas, infidelity is extending its blighting influence! And yet, it is a relief to know that the friends of God, of truth and holiness, are on the alert. It is pleasant to think in how many Christian temples the word of the Lord is proclaimed from Sabbath to Sabbath—to think what hundreds of thousands of minds in this land, are brought regularly under the influence of that truth. Here is our hope for the country, and for the world! But,

III. The Sabbath, rightly viewed and properly kept, is a blessing to man as a candidate for eternity.

What is the period of man's life here? What the whole duration of this world's existence, when compared with eternity? What are all the wealth, and honor, and pleasures of the present life, when compared with the realities of eternity! Verily, they are less than vanity and nothing. In this world we scarcely begin to exist; our being is in eternity. Our long, *long* home is beyond the bounds of time. And yet in this life, short as it is, our characters must be formed for that long eternity. If formed for heaven, it must be through the power of our holy religion; it must be through an intelligent reception of the truth,

and the sanctification of the Spirit. Such reception of the truth, however, will not take place, except serious attention be given to it. And amid the cares and pressing pursuits of the present life, it seems essential that some time should be appropriated to religious instruction and contemplation. This necessity is fully met by the institution of the Sabbath. It is hallowed by God himself. It comes to us, as if clad in the atmosphere of heaven. This, the pious feel. Often, as the Sabbath dawns upon them, they feel a hallowing influence come over them, while their hearts are lifted heavenward, in warm desire and holy anticipations. Nor do the pious alone feel this influence. It is often felt by others, leading them to thoughtfulness, and often, to permanent conviction. Thus, through the influence of the Sabbath, wherever it is hallowed and improved, are souls ripening for an eternal Sabbath in heaven. O blessed day! It is as if God, on its return, breathed a breath of heaven upon this fallen world, to hallow and prepare us for our final home. How then should it be prized!

My brethren, the necessity of such an institution is obvious. The blessedness of its influence must be manifest to all candid observers. Let us then hail the Sabbath as a precious gift of heaven. Let us hallow it, and devoutly seek to improve it. Let us remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, calling it a delight, the holy of the Lord. Let us strive, under its hallowing influence, to advance from week to week heavenward.

"Sweet is the day of sacred rest,
No mortal care shall seize my breast;
O may my heart in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

SERMON XVIII.

SOCIAL MEETINGS.

HEBREWS X. 25.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

Among the means instituted by our blessed Lord, for the edification and spiritual growth of the saints, an important place is given to social meetings for divine worship. It was to such meetings that he looked when he said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It was in reference to these gatherings of the disciples of Jesus, that the apostle spake in the following language: "Speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord."

These meetings, in the apostolic and succeeding ages, were highly prized by Christians. No trifling obstacles, no fear of their persecutors, could prevent them. Deprived of the privilege of meeting in public places,

they resorted to retired rooms, where, in seclusion from the eye of their ever vigilant enemies, they might enjoy together the sweet fellowship of the Spirit. Deprived the privilege of coming together under the light of the sun, they assembled in the dead of the night, prefering the spiritual refreshing which they failed not to experience in their holy convocations, before the slumbers in which the world around them was wrapped. In their own happy experience, they knew the import of the apostle's language—"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The places where they met in the name of their ascended Lord, were indeed heavenly in Christ. According to his own word, Christ was in the midst of them, breathing his spirit into their hearts, inspiring them with his love, and feasting them on the precious fruits of divine grace. In those places of holy convocation, as much as anywhere, were they ripened for their final inheritance with the saints in light.

And, my brethren, there are Christians now living, who are not altogether strangers to the blessedness of devout social worship. There are those who rank the regular prayer meetings of the church among their most precious privileges. No common calls of worldly business, no scenes of worldly amusement or gratification, can detain them from the place where the brethren meet to pray and sing praises unto the Lord. And such, I may add, in seasons of revival, are the feelings of Christians generally. I never knew a revival in which social meetings were not attended with satisfaction and interest.

But, my brethren, as such meetings occupy an important place in the divinely appointed means of grace, to

attend and sustain them, should be a matter of principle with Christians. Principle should secure an attendance, even though circumstances might influence us to pass them by.

I design on the present occasion to call your attention to a consideration of some reasons why Christians should punctually attend and zealously maintain the social meetings of their respective churches.

I. *The promised presence of Jesus.* The first disciples felt that it was good to be with their Lord. Present with him, they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and of his fullness they all received, and grace for grace. Sitting in his blessed presence, they breathed a divine air, and felt a peace within, passing understanding, while their hope of life eternal waxed firm and strong. In his presence they felt a hallowing influence, which raised their affections heavenward, and gave them a strong earnest of joys eternal, at the right hand of God.

And what though we do not now see the Lord in the flesh, as he was seen by the apostles: there is a sense in which he manifests himself unto his people now. "I will not leave you comfortless," said he; "I will come unto you." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Even the disciples of our Lord, in the days of his flesh, were not so much blessed by his visible presence as they were by the manifestations of his divine glory. It was not the flesh that profited them; it was in the quickening of the spirit that so abundantly blessed them. It was because, with spiritual discernment they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, that he became the object of

their warmest love, and his presence a heaven to their souls.

Thus, brethren, does our blessed Lord still manifest himself to his people, and especially when they are gathered together in his name. Of this, there are numerous witnesses. Yes, painfully prevalent as is the neglect of the social gatherings of Christians in many churches, there are those who prize them as among their highest privileges. No trifling obstacles are allowed to detain them from the place where they meet their Lord, and especially feel his quickening presence. Of the presence of the Lord among his assembled children, they are often delightfully conscious, while their hearts within them are made to burn with divine love, and rejoice in a present salvation, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Would that a greater number might become witnesses to this blessed truth! Brethren, from the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ to the present time, Christians have been accustomed to assemble together to mingle in the worship of their Saviour. Looking down upon these gatherings of his people through succeeding ages, with satisfaction peculiar to himself, as their Redeemer and the object of their love and desire, he said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Would you, therefore, meet your Lord, and be blessed in his presence, fail not to be constant attendants at the place of social worship.

II. Such assemblies as we have under consideration, are adapted to the social nature of man, and hence are highly conducive to the spiritual improvement of those who have entered upon the Christian course.

Next to pouring out his heart in gratitude and praise to his Redeemer, whose love amazing has rescued him from utter and everlasting ruin, one of the first promptings which the new-born Christian feels, is to seek some one who can sympathize with him in his divine joys: some one to whom he can relate what great things God has done for his soul, and who can speak to him the language of Canaan. Such intercourse, such interchange of sentiments and feelings, his new-born nature demands. Without it he must feel a want, an *important want*, unsupplied. This want, although often met and very satisfactorily supplied in spiritual conversation with individual Christians, is more fully met and satisfied in the social meeting. There he can unbosom his feelings and speak of his joys, not to one alone, but to numbers of warmly sympathizing friends, partakers of like precious grace with himself. There he is cheered by the joys, and blessed in the blessings of the whole congregation. There he feels the blessedness of fellowship with kindred minds, and the comfort of brotherly love. Of this blessedness the psalmist seems to have had a strong view, even in his time: for Christ had a chosen seed then upon the earth. "Behold," said he, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Yes, my brethren, the social meeting, among spiritual Christians who know their sins forgiven—in whose hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost—who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, is a most blessed place. What Christian in such a place has not at some time felt to adopt the language of Watts, and sing,

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

Mind acts upon mind. Often, minds united in the pursuit of some end, exert a powerful influence to draw others into the same channel with themselves. It is with an eye upon this principle that politicians have got up their large conventions and mass-meetings. They wish to form a current of mind toward their desired end, and in this they have often succeeded. We have seen with what force the mass of the people have been carried along with the current of popular feeling and excitement. Now far be it from me to convey the impression, that men can be made Christians, or sanctified and made meet for heaven, by the force of social influences alone. This can never be. The renewal and sanctification of our moral nature can only be effected by the power of the Spirit of God. And yet, while we are the subjects of this inner work of the Spirit; while God is working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, circumstances around may be favorable to the more rapid progress of that work. And what circumstances can be more favorable to the healthful progress of the work of God within us, than those by which we are surrounded when mingling with the people of God in the exercises of social worship? 'Tis there we hear the pious speak of what God has done and is doing for them. There we hear the Saviour spoken of in terms of gratitude, and love, and adoration. There we hear of heaven, toward which the hearts of those around us are drawn by the blessed attractions of divine love. In all this, a blessed commingling of spirit

is felt. In all, there is a current of mind heavenward, and we often feel ourselves taken along with it, till we feel that heaven is near, and are made to rejoice in the prospect before us.

Nor is the influence of such meetings transient, especially where they are constantly attended, and where their benefits are properly appreciated. Christians carry their influence into the world with them. The divine fires kindled in their hearts in the place of social prayer and Christian conference, continue to burn amid the cares and toils of the present life, and often, amid those cares and toils, do they look with earnest desire for the return of these refreshing feasts of love.

Such, my brethren, is the adaptation of social meetings to the Christian's social nature. Would you, therefore, attain to something more than the bare form of religion; would you drink from the ever open fountain of divine consolation, and know the fellowship of the Spirit and the comfort of love; would you be prepared, finally, for companionship with the whole army of the saints in light, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as, alas, the manner of two many is. Be punctual at the prayer meeting and religious conference.

III. The social meeting, if properly maintained and conducted, is often blessed to the salvation of souls. It is the means, under God, of their conversion.

We do not ordinarily expect our social religious meetings to be largely attended by the impenitent and unconverted, though we are always glad to see them present, when they are inclined to be with us. While careless of their souls' eternal good, and of their obligation to God, they do not feel an interest in the prayers, the

praises and the mutual exhortations of the disciples of Christ. But when their attention is called to the solemn subject—when they begin to make the most serious and important of all inquiries, "What must we do to be saved?"—they will be prompted by the state of their minds to attend those meetings where the people of God are accustomed to speak of the way of life. How well the exercises of the prayer meeting and the Christian conference are calculated to enlighten the humble and earnest inquirer, thousands could testify, who have there found salvation. It is where brethren dwell together in unity—where they mingle the devotions of their renewed hearts before the throne of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God commands the blessing, even life forever more. And thousands, coming in among the heirs of salvation, with burdened and anxious hearts, have become partakers of that blessing.

Social meetings, therefore, should be sustained, and rendered interesting, in every Christian church, for the sake of those around, who may desire to know the way of life.

And, my brethren, is it the duty of the Church to maintain social meetings? then it is the duty of each individual member to do it. They cannot be sustained where individual responsibility respecting them is not felt. As, therefore, you would contribute to the aggregate of influence tending to lead men to the knowledge of God and salvation, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Let it not be said, Here is a professedly Christian church, in which no social meeting is maintained for the mutual edification and spiritual improvement of its members. Let it not be said, Here is a body, bearing the name of a church, in which no

social gatherings for prayer, and praise, and mutual exhortation, are exerting their influence for good, upon every class who may choose to attend them. Indeed, my brethren, no church should feel satisfied that its duty is done, till it can number among its means of grace, a stated, social meeting, of a spiritual and refreshing character; one that may be attended with profit by the anxious inquirer for the way of salvation, and that shall tend to strengthen the faith and hopes of its members.

I have thus imperfectly spread this subject before you. I now leave it with you, in the hope that, whatever the circumstances around you may be, you will never forsake the assembling of yourselves for social worship, till you shall be called to rise and join the general Assembly and Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven—in purer, loftier worship than can be attained on earth; which may God grant for Jesus' sake.—AMEN.

SERMON XIX.

DANCING BY PROFESSORS OF RELIGION.

EPHESIANS V. 22.

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

THE Christian profession is one of most solemn import. It involves considerations of a most serious nature, and of the highest possible importance to the dearest interests of man. It involves a consideration of our relations to God and eternity. It supposes a conviction of our fall, and consequent guilt and exposure to eternal ruin. It supposes a full belief of divine interposition in our behalf, in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, understandingly and heartily entered upon, and honestly, devoutly, and perseveringly maintained, it will not fail to conduct to eternal life in the kingdom of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." "To him that overcometh, will I give to set with me in my throne, even as I also

overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Nor are the results of the Christian profession confined to those who enter upon and maintain it. To the little company who had turned their backs upon the world, and ventured their all upon the faith of Christ while he was in the world, it was said, "Ye are the salt of the earth—ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." The import of this language cannot be mistaken. It is certain that the disciples, as sincere and true professors of the Christian faith, were to exert an important influence upon their fellow-men. As Christians, maintaining their high and holy profession, they were to win men from the paths of sin and folly, to the knowledge and love of God, and his Son Jesus Christ. And thus they were to be instruments of their eternal salvation. And O, my brethren, what a change! How unspeakably important the Christian profession, as presented to our view in these words of our blessed Lord!

Nor has our holy profession, when properly maintained, failed to effect its most important ends. The records of Christianity in its earliest progress are filled up with brilliant examples of its blessed influence upon those who embraced it. It is delightful to contemplate the lives of the apostles and other Christians of their day. Never before had men attained to such felicity. It was their peculiar privilege to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—to "rejoice evermore"—"pray without ceasing and in every thing give thanks." It was theirs to rejoice, and sing victory, even to the end of life. Even death was welcomed with emotions

of holy triumph, as a passage to the consummation of their blessedness forevermore.

All this, my brethren, is to the praise and glory of the Christian profession. It was the religion of the meek and lowly Christ, received in simplicity of faith, professed in a good conscience, lived by the assistance of divine grace, that filled so many thousands with exceeding joy through their earthly pilgrimage, and lighted up such glory in the valley of death, as dispelled all its gloom, and made it a passage of transport to the raptures of eternal felicity.

Such *was* the Christian profession in its first days, and, my brethren, such should it be every where, and in every age. So long as it has remained pure and unclouded by errors in doctrine, and untarnished by irregularities in practice, so long it has retained its power to enlighten and bless the world. But, wherever the Church has declined from the simplicity of the faith once delivered to the saints, and from the purity and spirituality of life which characterized the apostolic churches, she has been shorn of that power.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Satan should employ all his subtlety, and his most cunning devices, to mar the Christian profession, and render it powerless of good to man. This he did even in the days of the apostles. Hence the necessity of the numerous cautions, and warnings, and exhortations of the inspired apostles to the churches over which they stood in the Lord. They were deeply concerned lest Satan should get an advantage of the Church, and so eclipse her light, and deprive her of her power to bless and save men. Prompted by such concern, they warned

against even the appearance of evil. "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Now, considering the serious nature, the unspeakable importance of the Christian profession, certainly that profession should not be assumed but with serious and prayerful deliberation. And when it is assumed, it should be our constant and prayerful concern to maintain it. We should fear nothing so much as to bring a reproach upon it. The slightest deviations from that sober, righteous and godly life, to which our holy profession binds all who assume it, may be fraught with consequences most bitter to our own souls, and to the souls of others—consequences which we must meet at that dread tribunal to which we are all hastening. O, can we be willing to wound our blessed Saviour in the house of his friends?—to grieve those who, walking in his love, are solicitous for our spiritual health and prosperity?—to lay a single obstacle in the way of the salvation of those living around us in impenitence? O, who, that has felt the love of Christ in his heart, would be willing to put a weapon into the hands of his enemies? Merciful Saviour, save us all from so great an offence against thee and thy holy cause in the world!

It is not sufficient, my brethren, that we abstain from what we know to be evil positively. We are bound to abstain from whatever has even the appearance of evil —should we be solicited to enter upon any course of indulgence, which may by any means be construed as evil, and so become a cause of grief to the pious and of encouragement to the wicked in their impenitence, our duty is imperative. As we would be true and faithful to our blessed Saviour; as we would secure our own peace; as we would be a blessing to the world, we

should firmly decline. Such is the import of the exhortation now under consideration.

It will be seen, that this apostolic injunction, may be applied in various cases. From whatever has the appearance of evil, we are here commanded to abstain. It is my design, however, to consider it, at present, as applicable to one particular practice, which, in many places, has already exerted a baneful influence upon the best interests of Zion, and of souls, and which threatens them with still wider and deeper injury. The evil of which I speak is the AMUSEMENT OF DANCING.

I am aware that the bare announcement of this theme may startle some, and throw them, at the very outset, into an attitude of resistance. I am aware, moreover that plain dealing on this subject may give offence to some, as has been gently hinted to me. These considerations, however, must not deter me from the discharge of what I feel to be an imperative duty. But if, while I may speak with decision, to treat the matter with candor will save giving offence, then I hope to be heard with candor, and with respect. I speak as the pastor of a Christian church, expecting to render an account to the Judge of all at the last day. "We watch for souls, as those that must give account."

One remark farther. *I speak to professors of religion.* However painful it may be to the Christian, and to the Christian minister, to see men—immortal beings—probationers for eternity—trifling away that season of probation, upon the improvement of which their eternal salvation depends, I am more concerned, that the members of the Christian flock under my charge should keep themselves unspotted from the world—should in

no way contribute an influence to hasten the progress of the perishing in the road to ruin.

Now I state it as my most deliberate and settled conviction, that all professors of religion should abstain entirely from all participation in the amusements of the ball-room, and absent themselves from all dancing parties. My reasons for such conviction I will now state.

I. The spirit of the dance is totally opposed to that serious, inquiring and solemn state of mind, which must precede the rational and hearty reception of Christ as the Saviour of the soul.

A glance at the history of the Christian religion, from its first propagation by the apostles, through every age to the present, will furnish abundant evidence that the true reception of Christ is always, necessarily, preceded by serious thoughtfulness, by solemn and painful conviction. No man ever yet truly embraced Christ as his Saviour, and yielded his heart to the renewing power of divine grace, who did not feel himself guilty before God, condemned by the voice of eternal justice, and exposed miserably and eternally to perish. How can any one apply to Christ for salvation without such conviction? What has he to do with Christ as a Saviour, who does not feel that he is, as a sinner, in a lost and perishing condition? Plainly he cannot do it.

The records of the scriptures are in perfect accordance with this view. Did the psalmist call upon the name of the Lord, saying, "O Lord I beseech thee, deliver my soul;"—it was when the pains of hell got hold upon him. Did the multitude on the day of Pentecost, gladly receive the word of salvation;—they were first pricked in the heart—pierced by pungent convic-

tion, and said, "What must we do?" Did the Philippian jailer believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and taste the joys of salvation; he first fell at the feet of the servants of God, and trembling, asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Thus has it always been, through every age of the Church. Thus it has been in pure revivals of religion within our own observation. Solemn impressions of eternal things have preceded an intelligent and cordial reception of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the exercise of saving faith.

Now I ask you, my brethren, to compare the scenes of a genuine revival of religion, with those of the ball-room—the state of mind with which the penitent sinner approaches the throne of mercy, with which the truly pious pray and labor to bring their friends to Christ, with that which invariably pervades the dancing party, and then say, Is there, can there be any agreement between them?

II. The spirit of the dance is totally opposed to the watchfulness and spirituality essential to the full development of the Christian character, and to the final salvation of the soul. "Watch and pray," said our blessed Lord, "lest ye enter into temptation." "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate. For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Said an apostle, "Walk in the Spirit." "Be filled with the Spirit." "To be spiritually minded, is life and peace." And he exhorted his brethren in the following strong and impressive language: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Now, in these inspired passages, we have a view of

the true Christian life. It is a life of striving against the evil inclinations of our own nature, and against the corrupting influences of the world; it is a life of watchfulness against temptations; it is a life of prayer, of humble penitence, of devotion to God and his holy cause in the world, and it is a life of spiritual communion with God, and of joyful hope of everlasting life in the world to come.

My hearers, have you read the records of the early Christian churches with interest and care? If so, you must be impressed with the seriousness, the holy solemnity and earnest devotion to God and the interests of souls, which prevailed among their members. They lived, and toiled, and suffered, and endured, as seeing him who is invisible. With the spirit of the world, they had no communion. And, my brethren, religion is the same now as then, and so is a Christian life.

Now will any one maintain that the mirth of the ball-room, the spirit of the dance, are consistent with such a life? Suppose a Christian professor should be found mingling in these amusements; suppose he should be asked, What are you doing here? Could he consistently answer, I am striving to "work out my salvation with fear and trembling;" I am striving "to enter in at the strait gate;" I am giving "diligence to make my calling and election sure"? Could any person, amid the merriment of the dancing party, answer thus? Verily, no one will presume to affirm it. Christian watchfulness and prayer, and striving for salvation, are not witnessed in the dancing party. They are regarded by the devotees of worldly pleasure, as totally unsuited to the place and the occasion.

III. The Christian professor in the ball-room, is

looked upon by the world as abandoning his religion. He is there regarded as an apostate from his profession.

However strongly averse the impenitent and pleasure-seeking may be, to the strictness and spirituality of the Christian religion, they cannot but know something of it. Nor will they fail to discern any inconsistencies in those who have professed it. They watch for such inconsistencies with eagle eyes, and seize upon them with avidity, and wield them with skill, as weapons against the holy religion of the cross, which is at war with their cherished sinful pleasures. Why is it, my brethren, that when, occasionally, the members of our churches are found mingling in this description of amusements, it is made the occasion of exultation, often of vulgarly profane exultation, in the bar-room and other places of resort for the despisers of our holy religion? Plainly, because those members are regarded as abandoning their religion, and turning again to the world. Verily, I have thought, could these unhappy youth, who have yielded to temptation and strayed from the paths of strict piety, but hear the speeches of which they are the subjects, and witness the sneer with which their names are mentioned, if not from regard to the precious name of Christ and his cause, yet, from self-respect, they would never be seen in such places again.

And now I, would solemnly press the question, Can you, my brethren, who have in a most solemn profession renounced the world, and devoted yourselves to Christ, can you thus turn again to the beggarly elements of the world? Can you be willing thus to grieve the hearts of the pious, and become an occasion of reproach to the cause of the Saviour? Can you be willing thus to put the language of profane triumph into the mouths of the

enemies of the cross of Christ? I cannot see how you can do it. I will not expect it from you. I must and will hope better things of you.

IV. As a thing of course, the influence of Christian professors, who persist in mingling in dancing parties, is lost, nay, worse than lost, to the Church.

So unlike are the spirit and tendencies of these amusements, to the spirit which prevails in spiritual assemblies, that those who mingle in the first are sure to lose their relish for the last. Ball-going Christians, if indeed it is allowable to speak of such, are not usually found in meetings for social prayer and mutual exhortation. Upon this point, facts speak in language too plain to be misunderstood. Of course, their influence is lost there. They derive no profit from the social worship of God to their own souls. They cut themselves off from spiritual good flowing to the faithful Christian through this important channel. Nor do they make any exertion to bring others within the influence of this important means of grace. On the contrary, their influence is against the success of the social meetings of the Church. Here, then, their influence, as members, is lost—worse than lost, to the Church.

Again: Personal religious conversation is a means of usefulness to the Church, and to the world, which has often been improved with cheering success by consistent and faithful Christians. To this kind of Christian effort, the Church and the heathen world were largely indebted for that amiable and devoted missionary, G. D. Boardman. It was a kind and faithful conversation of a pious fellow-student, which, by the blessing of God, reached his heart, and resulted in the submis-

sion of his heart to the Saviour. After the preaching of the gospel by men called to the work by the Spirit, and separated to it according to the usages of the churches, perhaps no description of effort is more frequently blessed to the salvation of souls. How important, therefore, that every professing Christian should ever be in a state of readiness to serve Christ and the souls of men in this way!

But, my brethren, how is it with those members of the churches, who are drawn away by the enchantments of the dance and the dancing party? I do but speak what will be conceded on all hands, when I say that no such Christian effort can be expected from this quarter. However faithful any young man may have been, in this respect, in the early part of his Christian profession, mingling in the amusements under consideration is sure to destroy his inclination for personal effort for the salvation of those around him. He cannot, while mingling with the world in scenes of mirth, in earnest and sincere affection appeal to unconverted associates to make their calling and election sure. No; their influence, desirable as it is, in this respect, is lost to the Church. Of this we have evidence in too many melancholy examples.

Here, again, allow me in warm affection to appeal to you, my young brethren. Before you there is an open door of usefulness. There is a sphere in which you may act without ostentation, with no violation of the modesty appropriate to your age and circumstances. In the usefulness of others who have remained true to their holy profession, you have great encouragement to faithfulness. Can you turn from all this, prefering the short-lived pleasures of the ball-room before the joys of

pure religion, and the privilege of being useful to the Church and the souls of men? May heaven forbid it. May the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls preserve you from temptation and make you a blessing to the Church and to the world.

Such, my brethren, are some of the considerations which should lead professing Christians to separate themselves from all dancing parties. I have attempted to state them plainly, and at the same time, in the language of kindness. I will hope that the effort, humble as it is, will be blessed of God to the good of the Church.

I am aware, that even professors of religion have attempted to defend the practice against which I have spoken. Into a consideration and review of what has been said by such, I cannot now enter. I will, however, close with one general remark. If dancing, as practiced in the present age, is a perfectly consistent Christian practice, we shall doubtless find some notice of it in the records of the apostolic churches. Now we read of Christians meeting after months and years of separation—of their rehearsing with high satisfaction, with mutual, heart-felt rejoicings, the wonderful success of the gospel—of there being great joy in a certain city where the gospel was preached with remarkable success—of their thanking God and taking courage. But where, my brethren, in all the records of apostolic Christianity, do we read of an Apostolic Ball? We have balls in these days, got up in honor of distinguished men, both in civil and military life. We have balls in honor of victories on the battle-field, and of victories on the field of political strife. But where, in the history of the apostolic churches, have we an ac-

count of a ball got up in honor of the chief of the apostles, or in honor of any of the victories won by the sword and spirit of the Lord over Satan and sin? Surely, no such account is found. An apostolic ball! The idea is ludicrous. Perhaps I may be censured for naming it. Well then, if such an idea is ludicrous, let me beseech you who have taken the vows of God upon you—who are called by the holy name of Christ, never to reproach that holy name by mingling with the world in amusements, in which the name of Jesus, your Saviour and mine, would be regarded as an unwelcome intrusion.

And now, my brethren, I beseech you, by the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye abstain from all appearance of evil; and that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—AMEN.

SERMON XX.

FUTURE PUNISHMENT ETERNAL.

REVELATION XXII. 11.

He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.

The book of Revelation is emphatically a book of prophecy. In it were foretold, for the most part in highly figurative language, the vicissitudes through which the Church of Jesus was to pass, from the period of its publication to the end of time. Nor does it stop with a prediction of the scenes of time. It carries us, in its sublime revelations, beyond the bounds of time, and spreads before us an awfully interesting view of the conditions of men in their eternal state. Here the nations of the saved are seen inhabiting a city of transparent gold, enclosed by a wall of jasper, illuminated by the glory of God, with all tears wiped from their eyes, perfectly blessed in chaunting the praises of the Redeemer forever. Here, too, the finally impenitent among men are described as suffering the just and

inevitable punishment of their sins. How awfully interesting then is this closing book of the sacred volume! And with what reverance and awe should we search for the import of its sublime teachings!

The text is a part of the last chapter. It is among the closing passages of the book which God has given to men, for their warning, their instruction and salvation. What does it teach. Does it not solemnly warn us that a time is at hand beyond which no moral change can be effected in the characters of men? Such is its import to me, and such, I am persuaded, you must all say it must be. "The time is at hand: He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Whoever comes to that time in his sins, or, in the language of the text, "unjust—filthy," will be removed from those moral influences, by which alone men can be made meet for an inheritance among the saints in light. So on the other hand, "He that is righteous and holy, let him be righteous and holy still." With such as shall have experienced the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, there shall be no more exposure to temptation or any evil influence. Henceforth they shall dwell in the presence of God forever.

The text has an important bearing upon the subject which, according to appointment, I am to consider this afternoon, viz. "The duration of the punishment of the wicked." I think it was clearly shown on a former occasion, that men who die in their sins will be punished in the world to come. But of the duration of that punishment—will it be limited, or will it be perpetual?

Now if I have stated the true import of the text, the

answer is plain. It must of necessity be perpetual. If there will be a time, beyond which if men pass guilty and polluted, they must be so still, then must they feel perpetually the "wrath that is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men."

What is so plainly implied in the text, I shall now attempt to support by several plain arguments.

I. The scriptures are silent respecting any means employed in the world to come, to bring the wicked to repentance and salvation. So far from affording any such ground of hope for those who die in sin, it seems apparent on the face of the sacred writings, that this life is the seed-time, eternity the harvest, where those who have sown to the spirit—that is, diligently sought to prepare for their future state, by leading lives of piety on the earth, will of the spirit reap life everlasting; while, on the other hand, those who have sown to their flesh—that is, have devoted themselves to the pursuit of sensual pleasures alone, shall of the flesh reap corruption. This life is the probation, eternity the season of rewards and punishments. Hence the invitations and warnings of the Bible imply the necessity of heeding them in time, lest the fatal point beyond which mercy cannot reach the sinner, should be passed in sin.

The prophet Isaiah had a view of the provisions of the gospel. He saw their adaptation to the necessities of sinful men, and with a heart overflowing with joy, he invited the people to the great feast of salvation. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that

which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

But how must they come? In a subsequent verse we are plainly told: "Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found;* call ye upon him *while he is near.* Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." To become partakers of the provisions of divine grace, therefore, the wicked must forsake their way and unrighteous men their thoughts, and turn unto the Lord. And they must do this *while he may be found—while he is near.* Does not this language plainly imply, that a time will come when the Lord may not be found?—when in mercy he will not be near. Plainly it does. Does any one ask when that time shall be? I answer, at the longest, when the soul shall pass away to an eternal state, in sin, leaving Sabbaths, a preached gospel, the Spirit of grace, and all the means of salvation, behind: in a word, at death, when, according to the scriptures, "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

Now in addition to this, when we consider the fact, that the inspired heralds of the cross ceased not to warn men, night and day, with tears, exhorting them to give diligence to make their calling and election sure—to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, solemnly cautioning them against the danger of treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, after a hard and impenitent heart—uttering not one word respecting means of grace, or an opportunity to secure salvation in the world to come; but strongly asserting the impor-

tant truth, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment":—how is it possible for men, professing to believe the Bible, to flatter themselves with the hope that though they should live and die impenitent and sink to hell, they may eventually be redeemed from its torments! Verily, such a hope is without the shadow of support in the scriptures.

II. Another argument which I shall offer in support of the doctrine of the perpetual punishment of those who die impenitent, is drawn from the nature of that punishment.

It is conceded, at once, that many of the trials and afflictions experienced in the present life, are disciplinary. They are designed to wean men from the pleasures of sense, impress them with a sense of their dependence upon, and obligation to God, and so turn them from the vanities that might allure them to ruin, unto the wisdom of the just—into the path of life. St. Paul asserts this doctrine in the epistle to the Hebrews, (xii. 9, 10,) "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they, verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." It is important, however, to notice the language used. These disciplinary inflictions are called *chastening—chastisement*—terms that indicate both their nature and design. But not so of the final punishment of the impenitent. The final punishment of sinners, is nowhere spoken of as disciplinary, but as the righteous retribution of God.

In confirmation of this statement, I will call your

attention to a few passages, descriptive of the nature of the *punishment* threatened against sin. (Rom. ii. 8—9) "Tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath." (Jude 7.) "The vengeance of fire." (2 Peter, iii. 7.) "Perdition of ungodly men." (2. Thess. i. 8—9.) "Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." (2. Peter. ii. 12.) "These shall utterly perish in their own corruption." (Heb. x. 27.) "Fiery indignation which shall *devour* the adversaries." (Jude 13.) "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

Such is some of the language used by inspired men to represent the final punishment of wicked men of various classes. And here, I ask, Is it possible for any man candidly to consider the fearful import of such language, and yet maintain that it is expressive of nothing more than disciplinary inflictions? Is such language ever used by men to express fatherly chastisement? It cannot be avowed.

But, I maintain farther, that the punishment described has no tendency to effect a renewal in the moral characters and feelings of the wicked. The chastisements of the present life, spoken of by the apostle as designed to make the children of God partakers of his holiness, effect that end, only, as they are sanctified to us by the Spirit of grace. With the melting, and persuasive power of that Spirit men will have parted when they wake up in eternity. No, my hearers, if men hate God in this world, and refuse to yield to the reasonable requirements of his law, while surrounded by countless lessings from his munificent hand;—if they cannot be

allured to love and obey him by all the tenderness of divine entreaty, the promise of pardon, and above all, the voice of love and mercy from Calvary; it is certain that they will not hate him less, nor love his service more, when they come to feel the vengeance justly due to them as rebels against the rightful Sovereign of the universe. It is not evangelical repentance, repentance unto life, that the lost feel, under the punishment of their sins. It is the anguish, the rage of despair. They are represented as wailing and gnashing their teeth, rather than penitently seeking mercy.

Nor is this all. Was it true, that punishment of itself could atone for sin, and effect a moral change in men, qualifying them for an inheritance in heaven, where is the necessity of the gospel? On such a supposition, the death of Christ could have been dispensed with.

Now when we consider that the final punishment of the wicked is represented by such phrases as the following: indignation and wrath—blackness of darkness forever—everlasting destruction—utter destruction, and perdition; it seems impossible to avoid the solemn conviction, that it is retributive, or perceive the faintest ray of hope for those who bring it upon themselves.

III. An argument in support of the doctrine under consideration is found in the terms and figures used in the Bible to express the duration of the final punishment of the wicked.

The terms to which I allude, are, *everlasting—forever—forever and ever—eternal.* That these terms are sometimes applied to things of limited duration, is at once conceded. Such, however, is not their primary signification. Their primary signification is, endless.

They are to be understood as expressing perpetual duration, except when there is something in the connexion plainly limiting their sense. Thus, when they are used to indicate the duration of things pertaining to this world, they may be understood as limited to the whole duration of the world. When used to indicate the duration of things pertaining to the Jewish dispensation, they are of course limited by the termination of that dispensation. Hence we read of the everlasting hills; and of the land of Canaan, as the everlasting possession of the posterity of Abraham. But when they are used to indicate the duration of things beyond the limits of time, and pertaining to eternity, they are to be understood in their primary and unlimited sense. Indeed, it is the vastness of their signification, that suggests the use of them, in the limited sense to which allusion has been made.

That these terms are used to indicate the duration of the punishment of the wicked, will appear from the following quotations:—(Mark iii. 28—29.) Christ said, "Verily I say unto you, All sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto the sons of men . . . . . but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Now, no man can be in danger of that which is not. If, according to the word of our Lord, any class of men is in danger of eternal damnation, then is the punishment of that class perpetual.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, we have a minute and solemn description of the proceedings of the last judgment. In the fortieth verse, we have this solemn declaration: "These"—those on the left hand—"shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the

righteous into life eternal." Now I ask, my brethren if, taking this whole account into consideration, it does not appear like a final closing up of the affairs of men for eternity? Does it not leave the wicked in everlasting punishment, and the righteous in the enjoyment of life eternal? Is there an intimation that any subsequent change is possible? Not the least. From that day, no hope can dawn upon the wicked forever.

There is other phraseology in the scriptures, bearing upon this point. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." The idea conveyed in this language is fearfully impressive. The suffering is fearful. It is as the torment occasioned by the constant gnawing of a worm, or the burning of fire. This, however, might be endured for a time, could there be hope of final deliverance. Such hope, alas, is excluded, for the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. The conclusion is unavoidable. The future punishment of the wicked will be perpetual—it will be eternal.

The same important truth is taught in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The poor man, at his death, was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, a figurative representation of the rest of heaven. But not so with him who had made choice of this world as his portion. Of him it is written, "The rich man also died, and was buried, and, in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." What followed, may be stated in few words. He saw Abraham and Lazarus. He cried to Abraham for mercy. The mercy he sought, was water at the hand of Lazarus, to cool his tongue, for he was tormented in a flame. He was assured that his request could not be granted; that during his life time he had enjoyed his good things, probably the full desire of his

heart; but now his pleasures were gone. For the joys of heaven, he had sought and obtained no preparation. Hence his present sufferings were just. Besides, he was assured that the abodes of blessedness and the world of misery were separated by an impassable gulf. Thus his case was stamped as hopeless. Such is the substance of the parable as spoken by our blessed Lord. It was not spoken without design. It was designed to convey to the mind of the hearer and the reader, important truth. What then is the truth, lying on the face of this important portion of our Lord's word? I do not ask how ingenuity may dispose of it, but, what does it teach? What are the impressions which it is calculated to make on the mind of the simple, ingenuous inquirer after truth? Now whatever other impressions might be made by this parable on such a mind as I have supposed, it must make this one, that, after death, men are happy or miserable, according to the moral character in which they die, and that the state of each one, whatever it may be on opening his eyes in eternity, will remain unalterable forever. The gulf cannot be passed. No change can take place.

Other passages, to great length, might be presented under this branch of the subject, were it necessary, but it is not. I pass therefore, to remark—

IV. Another argument in support of the sentiment of our text, is found in the fact, that Christ will leave the mediatorial throne, at the judgment, to occupy it no more. Besides the name of Jesus Christ, no other is given under heaven or among men, whereby we must be saved. He, only, is exalted at the right hand of the Father, as Mediator, to give repentance unto Israel and

forgiveness of sins. Was it not for his mediation, repentance and salvation would be impossible for men. But, everlasting thanks to God that Jesus Christ, the righteous, is on the mediatorial throne. From thence, he speaks to men, and speaks to them in mercy. From thence he sends forth the spirit of grace to enlighten the minds of men, and incline them to enter the way of life by repentance and faith. While on that throne, while acting in the capacity of Mediator, "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

But, my brethren, Christ is ordained to another office. He is to be the judge of the quick and the dead. "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." In accordance with this appointment, the Son of man will yet come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." And when the separation is effected, he will proceed, as the Judge, clothed with authority divine, to pronounce the last, the irrevocable sentence on each class. To those on the left hand he will say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." O, fearful sentence! Who could endure it? But, turning to those on his right hand, he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Now with all this in view, I would solemnly ask, Where is the hope of the sinner, beyond the judgment?

If Christ, the only Mediator and Saviour, who, during the whole of our probation, speaks to us in the language of merciful invitation, leaves that office; if he takes the throne of judgment, and with authority speaks the fearful sentence of the wicked? If he says, Depart! where, from henceforth, is there a ray of hope for the sentenced? Alas, my hearers, there is no hopefor them farther. There remains to them nothing but the blackness of darkness forever.

Thus is the doctrine of our text sustained by considerations clear and convincing. And O, may that doctrine be deeply impressed upon each heart, and incline each one to act according to the counsels of true wisdom!

This subject, my brethren, teaches us the importance of an immediate attention to our spiritual concerns. No one among us need perish. Ample provision is made for the salvation of every one. God has proved himself long-suffering, and unwilling that any should perish. He has blessed you with opportunities and means, in the use of which countless thousands have obtained salvation. Would you but improve your day, and means, in humble dependence upon the Spirit of grace, you would find the Lord, to the present joy of your heart, and to the eternal salvation of your soul. "Why," then, "will ye die?" If at the last, any of you, who listen to me now, should die; if upon any of you that fearful sentence should fall, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"; be assured, as you sink in hopeless depths of wo, you can utter no complaint against him who bled for you on the cross, and whose voice, in tender, moving invitation,

you have a thousand times heard, but heeded not. You must then ascribe your hopeless ruin to your own folly. And, through all the rounds of a long eternity, it must be to you a bitter reflection, that your ruin has been of your own procuring.

Here I must close. I do it with the solemn question, "Why will ye die?" Turn, O turn to God and live.—AMEN.

SERMON XXI.

THE REIGN OF CHRIST.

REVELATION XI. 17.

We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

This, my brethren, is to be the language of the four and twenty elders before the throne, on hearing it proclaimed by great voices in heaven, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. Long will they have witnessed the prevalence of sin and misery in this apostate world. Long will they have seen the righteous authority of the King Eternal, profanely trampled upon, and his mercy spurned. Long will they have beheld the apparent triumph of Satan, the adversary, the prince of the power of the air, over the bodies and souls of men. But now, a different scene opens upon the view of holy beings. Now the triumph of Satan is at an end. Now righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, under the peaceful reign of

Emanuel, are contemplated as every where prevalent upon the earth. Now the establishment of the kingdom of God in all the earth is joyfully celebrated, while the spirit of rebellion is driven down to hell, henceforth to reek its vengeance on its own devotees alone.

My brethren, that glorious period, that great and blessed triumph of righteousness and truth, must come. It has been foretold,in one form or another, by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. It has been anticipated with joy by holy men of every age. It is rendered certain by the oath of Jehovah. (Isaiah, xlv. 23.) "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow; every tongue shall swear." That great day is approaching; in a sense, it is near at hand, when the prayer which daily rises from a thousand thousand pions hearts will be answered, and the name of our Father in heaven shall be hallowed in all the earth, his kingdom come and his blessed will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. O yes, my Christian brethren, the awful and precious name of our Father in heaven will yet be hallowed every where in this world. His kingdom will yet be established in all the earth, and righeousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall reign

"——— where e'er the Sun
Doth his successive journeys run."

Then shall the will of God be the universal law of the earth, written in the hearts of all, cheerfully, joyfully obeyed by all. Then shall this world be fully merged in the universal government of God, and with all holy intelligences, share in the endless blessings of his reign.

This most glorious state of things is to be brought about by the great power of God. "We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." Let us therefore, on the present occasion, consider the great power of Jehovah, and how it is to be exerted in the final establishment of his kingdom in the world.

I. Let us contemplate the great power of Jehovah, who is styled, Lord God Almighty.

This, my brethren, is an awful theme. We should approach it with awe and trembling reverence. It is not in the expectation that we can comprehend the power of the Highest, that I venture to call your attention to it—for "who by searching can find out the *Almighty* to perfection," in any of his attributes? Well may we exclaim, with the deeply impressed psalmist, as we turn our thoughts to so high and awful a theme, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me—it is high, I cannot attain unto it." But, imperfect and limited as our contemplations must be, this one important end may be answered by them. We may come to feel impressed with a solemn awe of God, whose we are, and upon whose pleasure our eternal destiny depends. It is manifest that inspired men were thus impressed, when they spake and wrote upon the subject. Mark the language of the prophet Isaiah, than whom no one of his day was favored with more intimate communion with God, or more enlarged views of his glory. (Isaiah xl. 12—18.) "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in

scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed him in the way of understanding? Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance! Behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing! And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted unto him less than nothing and vanity." And farther, in the 25th and 26th verses of the same chapter: "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created all these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one of them faileth."

What a view is here given of the power of God! Truly, he is "the Lord God Almighty." All the vast, the wonderful works by which we are surrounded, were brought forth into being by his might. With him, they seem as little things. "An undevout astronomer," said the brilliant Scotch divine who has lately gone to his rest, "An undevout astronomer, is mad." And verily, we may say, the man who can read the elevated strains of the inspired prophet, and with him look out upon the works of the divine hand, above, beneath, and all around, and feel no impressions of awe, in view of Omnipotence, must be strangely insensible.

"'Twas God who fixed the rolling spheres,
And stretched the boundless skies,

Who formed the plan of endless years,
And bade the ages rise.
From everlasting is his might,
Immense and unconfined."

O then let us tremble in view of his power, and adoringly bow before his throne.

But, my brethren, the power of God is not displayed in the natural world alone. It is equally manifest to the careful and devout observer in the moral world. What is the history of man, but the narration of events materially affecting his condition in this world, and often, his prospects for the future. Many of these events, considered by themselves alone, may seem of trifling consequence, and scarcely worthy of a record. And yet, when more particularly considered, they are found to be so connected with other events, as to constitute an essential link in some chain of occurrences, through which some of the most important results are brought to pass. I will give you an example, which now occurs to my mind. A female member of the royal family of Egypt, walking by the river side, espied an infant reposing in an ark of rushes. The unknown infant was brought to her. He wept. Her heart was touched with compassion. She took him home, provided for him, and trained him up as her own son. Now in all this, the superficial observer might see nothing wonderful. So far as he sees, it might all occur without any plan, or divine interposition. But what does the event show? In that foundling—in that favorite of the royal family of Egypt, was reared up Israel's deliverer. All was a part of a divine plan, to bring about an important and grand event, which was promised ages before. In pursuance of his own

gracious purpose and plan, God, by an unseen impulse, could direct the daughter of Pharaoh that way—could touch her heart with compassion for the outcast babe, and through her, protect him from harm till grown to manhood. Who can fail in this to recognize the power of God over the minds of men?

But I would remark farther, that it was not alone to the emancipation of his people from Egyptian oppression, that God looked when raising up his servant Moses. This event bore a relation to the subsequent advent of the Son of God, and the eternal salvation of millions of the human race. The reproaches which Moses incurred by renouncing the honors of the court of Egypt, were the reproaches of Christ, and he endured them, as seeing him who is invisible, esteeming them, in view of the final results—the final recompense of reward—as greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

Thus, my brethren, God is working continually, the world over, shaping, directing and controlling events, in a manner perfectly accordant with the freedom of his creatures, and in the end, bringing about the most important, benevolent and far-reaching results. Thus will he cause "the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he will restrain." His power is every where. It is working every where, and blessed, thrice-blessed is he who acknowledges the great truth, and cordially acquiesces in the great designs of eternal wisdom and power. He shall at last share in the glorious triumph of the most High.—Let us pass to consider,

II. The operations of the great power of God in the final establishment of his reign upon earth.

I. It is exerted, it operates, in a way of mercy.

This world, in all its dominions, in all the multitudes who inhabit it, is under the curse of rebellion against God. The prince of the power of the air worketh in the children of disobedience. The multitudes over the world, are in the snare of the devil, taken captive by him at his will. So universal is the reign of the great adversary in this world, that our Lord Jesus Christ styled him "*the Prince* of *this world.* "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." The kingdom of God, therefore, if it rises in this world, must rise out of the ruins of the empire of sin. The captives, the subjects of the prince of this world, must be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God, or as it is styled by the apostle, "The kingdom of his dear Son," for it is the Son of God, who has come to destroy the works of the devil, and bring us near to God.

And how can the power of God rest upon rebel man in mercy, since he is justly condemned to everlasting ruin? Only through the mediation of Emanuel—through the blood which he shed for the sins of men, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. But for this wonderful expedient of divine wisdom and love, divine power could have been exerted only for the destruction of our guilty race, as it was exerted against the angels that rebelled, of whom it is written, "God spared not the angels that sinned: but cast them down to hell, and delivered them unto chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And is the power of God exerted in delivering men from the power of Satan and translating them into the kingdom of God's Son? Let us see.

In what age, since the triumphant accession of our Lord to the mediatorial throne, have not facts occurred, which have amazed and perplexed the enemies of the gospel, while they have spread joy and gladness among the followers of Christ. Such a fact we have in the case of Paul. He was an enemy of the gospel. No one ever hated it more perfectly. Subsequently, he gloried in that gospel, as the chief joy of his soul—as containing a treasure for which he did not hesitate to sacrifice all that he had before esteemed valuable. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus, my Lord." And in the proclamation of the same gospel which once he hated so bitterly, he cheerfully endured reproach, and persecution, even unto death. From whence so great a change? It must be ascribed to the power of God, exercised toward and upon him in mercy through the mediation of Christ. The gospel came to him, not in word only, but in "power and in the Holy Ghost." It entered his heart, subduing its enmity, dispersing the power of darkness and superstition, and inspiring it with life and love divine. And now the subject of that gracious power, all within him, was cheerfully, joyfully yielded to the service of the Prince of peace, the Prince of salvation. He was in the kingdom of God's dear Son. Its principles, its hopes, were wrought into his moral nature, and he was a new creature. Henceforth he had his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

In all this, my brethren, who can fail to see the power of God unto salvation? Such changes do not occur in the absence of the gospel, and of those divine influences of which it speaks. Similar changes, different, it is true,

in many attending circumstances, have been occurring in every age since, while the number of the subjects of Zion's glorious King has been constantly enlarging. Many have been constrained to acknowledge the presence of divine power, in seasons of revival, even though they do not themselves become the happy subjects of its saving energy. In such seasons, how often do the stout-hearted tremble, sue for mercy, and surrender their all to the Lord Jesus Christ. How often do men come to hate what they once loved, and love what they once hated. Listen for a moment, in imagination to the stout-hearted, hardened sinner. What daring impiety! How horrid the oaths and imprecations he utters! How deep and dark the malignity of his heart toward divine things! But suppose that some days have passed, and that he has been surrounded by refreshing from the presence of the Lord. See him now. O how gentle! How placid and benignant his countenance! How changed his whole manner. Behold he prayeth! And how fervently he speaks the praise of him, whom, but lately he was wont to blaspheme. Aye, he is indeed a new creature. Old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new. But what has effected so wonderful a change? What, I ask, but the power of God in the gospel? It is to the praise of the glory of divine grace and power, that he now moves before the world, confessedly a new creature. God has taken to himself his great power, and extended his reign over his soul, and brought him into the kingdom of his dear Son.

And, my brethren, scarcely less manifest would be the working of divine power, should we consider the work as it is often effected upon persons, in some re-

spects of widely different dispositions. Contemplate the man of cultivated mind, of honorable and lofty bearing among men, of refined and amiable manners—the man who is disgusted with the low and vulgar profanity so prevalent in certain classes of the baser sort, and who, to all his other good qualities, adds that of high respect for the moral influence of our holy religion. Now all this is well, so far as it goes. Indeed, so well does it appear in his own estimation and in the estimation of some others, that they can scarcely believe that any thing is yet lacking, to qualify him for an inheritance among the sanctified in heaven. Nothing more seems necessary. And yet, with such men, one thing is lacking. That one thing is fundamental. It is to give the heart to God, and make his glory the prime motive of their lives. That they have not done this, is their condemnation; and from the guilt of this violated obligation, they can never be absolved, till they penitently bow before God, and humbly seek forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ. This, with such persons, is the trying point. Would it suffice to enlarge their benefactions to the cause of religion—to increase their contributions to the various branches of Christian benevolence—to become still more strict in their deportment? With all this they could comply. But to feel and confess themselves lost sinners, and with penitent hearts to bow before the throne of mercy, is another and more difficult thing. To this their pride of character opposes a most formidable obstacle.

But suppose a man of this class to have become convicted of his guilt in having lived without God in the world—of a total alienation of heart from the life of God; suppose that under such conviction, with a deep-

ly humbled spirit, he is heard to plead for mercy, through the merits of atoning blood alone—and thus no one pleads in vain—Is there no display of divine power in his change? Yes, verily, as such a mans its in humble penitence at the foot of the cross, gazing with tearful eye at the Lamb of God, slain for men—as he speaks of the joys of sins forgiven through the mediation of a precious Saviour, he is an object of wonder to those who surround him. They are constrained to confess that it is of God. And of this power, he is himself deeply, thankfully, joyfully conscious. As such men contemplate their former pride of character, and the alienation of their hearts from God—as now they sink in adoring love and gratitude before the throne of mercy, sweetly conscious of the divine favor, they are often a wonder to themselves. They can exclaim: "By the grace of God I am what I am." "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." In all this they are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into Christ's kingdom. God has taken to himself his great power, and extended his gracious reign over their souls. In them now, "grace reigns unto eternal life."

Thus, my brethren, God is working in the hearts of men of every class, in every land where the gospel of his grace is published. And who, that has felt his power and yielded to his grace, will not say, Ride on, thou glorious king, from conquering to conquer, till all the earth shall own thy sway! But

2. The great power of God is exerted for the destruction of the incorrigible.

I have said that the power of God, in bringing men into submission to his peaceful reign, is exerted in

accordance with their free moral agency. They are not coerced. They are constrained. They are drawn as if they would not come, and yet, there is a yielding on their own part, and they come freely, as if they were not drawn to Christ. But alas, what multitudes resist the gracious inclinings of divine power! Multitudes resist those gracious inclinings, and neglect the great salvation to the last. And how shall such escape? Escape the divine displeasure, they cannot. They "tread the Son of God under foot, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite unto the spirit of grace." According to the judgment of an apostle, such will be counted worthy of sorer punishment than those were, who despised Moses' law, and died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. They are despisers, who shall behold, and wonder, and perish.

Now although God in mercy may bear long with such, yet, all things that offend must and will, in the end, be taken out of the way. Consider the fate of the inhabitants of the old world, of Sodom and the other cities of the plain. Their wickedness was consummated. To such a pitch had they arrived in sin, that all hope of reformation in their case was precluded. Under the mercies of every day, they were waxing worse and worse. They were ripe for destruction. And when once divine power, unrestrained by the pleadings of mercy, was wielded against them, how speedy, how fearful their final overthrow!

And is it not thus on some occasions now? Instances have occurred in which men have opposed the whole force of their talents and influence to the work of divine grace, till God has taken to himself his great power

and removed them out of the way. Thus, be assured, he will do in the end. But, my brethren, there is a coming day of trial. God will yet deliver the godly out of all their temptations, and deliver the unjust to their own merited doom. Listen to the word of the Lord on this subject. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned: but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds:) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Thus, my brethren, it will be. The gospel of the grace of God will continue to be proclaimed more and more widely over the world. It will be attended by the Spirit of God, who, with divine energy, will apply it to the hearts of men. In those who, yielding to that power, receive the word, he will work salvation in all its fullness. If mighty ones arise and oppose the progress of the great work, God will, in his own time and way, dispose of them. They will be taken out the way. The great consummation is sure. The last, the top-stone in the spiritual temple of our God, will yet be brought to its place, with shoutings, "Grace, grace unto

it." This done, the scenes of earth will soon be closed. The subjects of the reign of grace, of the renewing and sanctifying power of God, the Holy Ghost, fully meetened for its holy joys, in glorious triumph, will enter the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. On the other hand, the wicked, the unbelieving, the opposers of the grace of God, of every age, of every clime, will be doomed to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Then will God's power be felt and confessed in every place.

And now, my brethren, what is the course for us to take? The answer is plain. There is but one wise and safe course. It is to fall in with the gracious designs of divine power. Happy is he whose feelings and designs and desires are in agreement with the gracious designs and workings of Omnipotence. He has nothing to fear, but every thing to hope for. In the ultimate triumph of Jehovah, he will triumph. In the eternal reign of Jehovah, he will rejoice in the fullness of immortal blessedness. Here, then, let us bow before the throne of the Highest, and through Jesus, surrender our souls, our whole being, to him who shall reign forever! —AMEN.

SERMON XXII.*

THE PLACE PREPARED FOR CHRISTIANS BY THEIR LORD.

JOHN XIX. 3.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

We are seldom, if ever, fully aware of the strength of our attachment to kindred and cherished friends, till they are about to be taken from us, or we from them. It is when the husband stands by his dying wife, that he feels, as never before, how deep, how strong, is conjugal affection. It is when the wife, bending over her expiring husband, anxious for another expression of love, calls him by name---the name she was wont to speak in the days of youth, but receives no answer—that she realizes, as never before, how tenderly, how ardently she loved him. It is when the father, or the mother, or both, are called to lay their own offspring down in the sleep of death, that they feel, as never before, the deep and mighty movings of parental love.

* Delivered June 7, 1849, at the funeral of Mr. Elwood Smith, a member of the M. E. Church in Bristol, Vt. Inserted by request.

In such circumstances, we find our hearts so fully joined to our friends, that their existence seems in a manner identified with our own. Hence the deep anguish occasioned by a separation. It is love bleeding. And, when the last words of parting have been said; when the final parting scene is past, with what melancholy satisfaction does memory dwell upon the endeared recollections of former days!

Most tenderly had the disciples of our blessed Lord become attached to him as a friend. For the space of three years they had been out and in with him. They had witnessed his works of mercy on the afflicted and distressed; they had listened to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, and often, in their souls, they had felt divinely blessed in his heavenly teachings. To them, his words had been "spirit and life." Their souls had become knit to his in holy love. They had literally left all and followed him. He was more to them than all others. It is no matter of wonder, therefore, that sorrow had filled their hearts, at the announcement, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me"—"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said to the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Well might they exclaim, If thou art taken from us, to whom shall we go? Thou art our life, our joy, our hope of all that is good to come!

But, my brethren, even sorrow, under the reign of grace, is often productive of joy. The light affliction of Christians here, shall "work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Jesus knew the sorrow which his words had caused in the hearts of his disciples, and that it had in a peculiar manner pre-

pared them to appreciate and receive a most important lesson of divine instruction, which, accordingly, he proceeded to impart to them. "Let not your heart be troubled," said he; "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

These words were fraught with considerations of deep and holy comfort to the afflicted and sorrowing disciples. They assured them, that, though absent from them in person, their blessed Lord would still be employed in their behalf—that their separation from him, however painful now, would be for a season only, and that he would come to them again, and take them to himself, to be separated from him no more forever. O blessed hope! Sustained and blessed by such a hope, well might they look upon all the sufferings of the present life, as not worthy to be compared with the glory which was to be conferred upon them in the day of their re-union with the Lord. But these words were designed to cheer and convey comfort to other hearts than those of the little flock who heard them as they fell from the lips of Jesus. They were recorded, to be read and received, and impart comfort to the followers of Jesus in every succeeding age, to the end of time. Are there disciples of Jesus here? Do you sometimes feel the spirit of sadness come over you, while your hope of future life trembles, and depression settles down upon your spirits? To you Jesus, the adorable Saviour, speaks, as in the words of our text and context, "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me." "I will come, . . . and receive you unto

myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Yes, Jesus, the risen and glorified Saviour, is now, beyond the sight of mortal eye, employed in behalf of his children who sojourn upon earth, amidst scenes of alternate joy and sorrow. He is preparing a place for them, and, sooner or later, he will come and take them to himself, that they may dwell in his presence forever more. To that blessed day, that consummation of your blessedness, O ye disciples of the Lord, look forward and rejoice!

Our text indicates the future blessedness of all true Christians. A place is preparing for them; and he who is gone to prepare that place, will come again and take them to their final home. Let us, therefore, on the present occasion, look into that place, the final home of Christians, so far as by faith in the divine word we may be able to, and contemplate the sources of enjoyment there open to the redeemed.

Before we proceed to more particular considerations, I will call your attention to two general remarks:

1. Heaven is a place. This is evident from the words of Christ, "I go to prepare a place for you." Of that place, a sublime and most enchanting view is given in the book of Revelation. It is a city, whose dimensions surpass all that mortal eye ever saw. It is fifteen hundred miles square. Its walls are of precious stones. Its streets are paved with gold. Its cloudless light is the ineffable glory of God and the Lamb. Within its amazing dimensions, tears never fall, sighs of anguish are never heard, and sorrow is never felt. There, is "*life eternal*."

2. In that place, the capacities of the redeemed will be fully met. Whatever want is felt, is there supplied.

Man's nature, redeemed and regenerated, will there meet, in endless fullness, all that it is capable of enjoying.

From these general remarks we will pass to consider some particulars.

I. Such is the moral nature of man, that the knowledge and love of God are entirely essential to his complete happiness.

"The wicked are" said to be "like the troubled sea," whose waters cease not to "cast up mire and dirt." But why is it so? The answer is plain. Deeply as they may be depraved, they nevertheless possess a moral nature which allies them to the spirit world, and to God, the great Author of all being. This nature can never rest, can never be fully blessed, short of communion with God, in the enjoyment of his conscious favor. And yet they are so depraved, so alienated from him in the affections of their hearts, that they cannot endure the burning purity of his character. Turning away from him with strongest aversion, prompted by the deep cravings of immortality within, and guided by depraved inclination, they rove from vanity to vanity in quest of bliss, but they find it not. With desires unsatisfied, and with a consciousness of guilt, which all must feel, who turn away from their Maker, and Preserver, and rightful Sovereign, they know, they can know no real peace.

Now the Christian, having been convinced of sin, and as inclined by the Spirit of Grace, penitently sought salvation through the blood of the Lamb, has found salvation through the remission of his sins, and the renewal of his moral nature. He has become a new

creature by the "washing of renewing of the Holy Ghost." Henceforth he breathes the spirit of adoption toward God. He cries, Abba, Father, while he feels the love of God, that joy of heaven, to earth come down. He can sincerely adopt the language of the Christian poet,

> "My God, the spring of all my joys,
> The life of my delights."

Thus he is prepared to enjoy the immediate presence and complacent smiles of his Saviour God.

Here we contemplate the works of God, and read the revelations which he has made of himself in the Bible, and, as Christians, we are assisted in these meditations by the Spirit which he hath given us. Through these mediums, some have been favored with such clear and enlarged perceptions of the holiness, majesty and glory of the Eternal, as have constrained them to fall before him in adoring love and awe. Such were the views and feelings of the psalmist when he penned the following adoring strains: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him." If such have been the views and feelings of saints, while contemplating the perfections of the King immortal, as they are seen through these visible manifestations of his wisdom and power and glory, What must be their emotions when permitted to stand in his immediate presence, surrounded by the effulgence of his unveiled glory!--when in Jesus, their Saviour, they find themselves confirmed as members of the great family in heaven. who behold the face of their Father and God in peace!

Can they be less than emotions of unspeakable rapture —of perfect bliss!

Can you not, my Christian friends, call to mind some peculiarly favored seasons in your Christian pilgrimage, when, like a beloved man of God now in heaven, you found communion with God so sweet that it would have been a privilege, at once to breathe your soul out into the bosom of your Saviour; or when, in the language of another, you "felt

> "The awe that dares not move,
> And all the silent heaven of love!"

At such times, you have learned more fully the import of the apostle's words, "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

But, my brethren, all this is no more than a foretaste of what the saints are to experience when they rise to behold the face of their Saviour and God in righteousness. O, the bliss of that moment, when the Christian, rising from the bed of death, from amid the sighs and lamentations of bereaved friends, first meets, amid the effulgent glory of the New Jerusalem, the complacent smiles of Him whose favor is life, and whose loving kindness is better than life—when the sanctified Spirit, loosed from its mortal encumbrances, soars to mingle with the spirits of the just made perfect, before the throne of God. Such a moment every child of God is destined to see. Such a moment our departed brother has seen. Of this, his consistent and steadfast piety assure us. But I pass to remark—

II. That man is a social being. As such, he is capable of sympathy with others, either in their joys or

sorrows. And I may add, that the exercise of his social powers seems necessary to complete his happiness. We have evidence of this truth in a thousand occurrences of the present life. When the child has made some new, and, to him, interesting discovery, with what a light step does he hasten to communicate it to his companions and friends! And when he sees that emotions are awakened in their bosoms, similar to his own, his joy is sensibly heightened. So also of the young convert to Christ. Having found redemption in the blood of the Lamb, and tasted the joy of salvation, he cannot rest till he has found some one or more to whom he can speak of redeeming love, and with whom he can join in the praises of that Saviour, who is to him the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. And great as his joy may be while contemplating, alone, the lovely wonders of redemption through the blood of Jesus, it is often greatly heightened, when he meets those who can sympathize with him in his blessed experience. With such, he knows the comfort of love. This principle in our nature is immortal. It will continue with us in our future state. Christians, therefore, will need society in the heavenly place, with which to mingle in their divine joys. This they will find. Said an apostle, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might not be touched . . . but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general Assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

Here, my brethren, is a most interesting view of the

future associations of the Christian. Bearing in mind that the Christian enters the heavenly place through the blood of Christ, perfectly cleansed from moral pollution, and entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness. How perfectly is the society of that world adapted to his moral taste and feelings. My Christian brother, is not such society as has been described in the language of the apostle, such as you delight in? Does not the hope of being finally united with angels and redeemed men, inspire you with deep and holy comfort? There, O there, the Christian will meet no discordant feeling. There, millions on millions, perfectly joined in the love of God, will praise their God and Saviour, in songs of perfect harmony. There will be met the flaming seraphim, who, for a thousand thousand ages has dwelt in the presence of the king of glory, the measure of whose bliss surpasses all human thought. There will be met the saints of former ages, many of whom have gone up from the earth out of great tribulation, to an exceedingly great reward in heaven, rejoicing in that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, spoken of by the apostle as the result of present afflictions. And, there will the Christian meet former companions in the Christian pilgrimage, all perfectly blessed in the joy of their Lord. In a word, he will there meet, and become a companion among, a great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and kindred and tongue under heaven, whose never-ceasing song shall be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive wisdom, and honor, and dominion and power—Amen, hallelujah."

Let us, my brethren, for a moment contemplate some scenes in which we have participated in this world.

How delightful, how ineffably sweet has been the communion and fellowship of Christian souls, when a few hundreds have mingled in the worship of their common Lord and Saviour for a few days. How often has an influence come down upon them from the world of light, melting their souls into one—baptizing them into one spirit—filling them, in a manner, with the fullness of God. Then has heart met heart, and love mingled with love, till their mutual joy has become unspeakable and full of glory. From such scenes, dear as their memory may be, let your faith rise and look up to the plains of paradise. Imagine yourself there, and then look around you. Think of yourself, surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of holy, happy beings, all perfectly blessed in the love of God, perfectly united in love one to another, while not a discordant feeling is known among them all. Think of yourself as perfectly joined in Spirit with the happy throng, and drinking into the bliss which reigns unceasingly among them. Will not this be enough? It was when contemplating that happy throng, in their perfect social blessedness, that the amiable and devout Pearce exclaimed, "O how I long to join that feast of love."

It could not be without a struggle, that our departed friend took his leave of the wife of his bosom, and the dear pledges of their mutual love; nor can we for a moment suppose that he has ceased to think of them, or that he will, during the period of their separation, cease to think of them, and love them, and in some way, suited to his present spiritual existence and widely extended relations and obligations, minister to their comfort and happiness? Nay, he may minister to them in a far more important manner than he could have done

here. But while thus employed, heaven is his home, angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, are his company, and God is his light and everlasting portion. There all his social powers, sanctified in the blood of the Lamb, find full scope for the most blissful exercise.

But I remark once more:

III. Man is made to be active. He cannot be truly happy in indolence. The constitution of his being, therefore, will demand employment in the heavenly place. And this he will find. Yes the saints in heaven will not cease to be active in employment perfectly congenial to their renewed and holy nature. "They rest not, day and night, crying holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty, which is, and which was, and is to come." And they sing there "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." In this employment, what Christian does not long to be engaged? So numerous is the throng within the New Jerusalem, who mingle their immortal voices in the song of redeeming love, that the swelling music of their anthems is compared to mighty thunderings.—Suppose, my brethren, that the loud peals of thunder which sometimes roll over the plains, and echo from hill to hill, were changed to tones of music, sweeter than any which have fallen upon our ear from the most delicate and perfect instrument; suppose that upon those tones, sweet, and yet awfully grand as they are, are wafted songs of praise to God and the Lamb. If you can do this, you may have some faint idea of the music of heaven, and of the employment in which the saints will be tirelessly engaged forever and ever,—of the employment of our departed friend and brother to-day. In that melody, which is comparable to mighty thunderings, his voice now mingles.

In conclusion, I would, in view of the solemn occurrence which has called us together, urge each one to lose no time in seeking a place among the friends and followers of Jesus. To such he will come. Such he will receive unto himself, and where he is, they shall be forevermore. But, my hearer, should you neglect the gracious invitations of the gospel, till the day of your probation is past, then, from this blessed hope you will be forever cut off. And do you see no danger of this? O think, how lately our departed friend was with us, actively employed in the business of this life, the very picture of health! Verily ye know not what a day may bring forth. You have not a day to waste. A few more days spent in impenitence, may seal your doom for eternal ages. Christ, neglected a few days longer, may turn away from you forever. He will come to his own, and comfort them in affliction. He will come to them in the hour of their final trial, and shine away the darkness of the valley of death. He will breathe his Spirit into their hearts and fill them with love and heaven. He will take them, in holy triumph, to the home he has prepared for them, where their every longing wish shall be satisfied in God and his fullness. But in all this, you, will have no part. Your portion must be in outer darkness. O be entreated to flee from the wrath to come!

My Christian brethren, a word to you. The cause of religion has sustained a sudden and heavy loss. It is not saying too much, to say that the brother whose loss we mourn, stood high in the esteem of all who knew him and had associated with him as a Christian. His fidelity to the cause of his Master was manifest to others also. Many, without, felt that he was a Christian. His faithful warnings, his kind entreaties, both

public and private, will be remembered by many, God grant, to their salvation. When such a Christian is taken from us, we sustain a loss. Who, my brethren, will fill his place in the management of church affairs? Who will take his place in the prayer meeting? In these employments and privileges, he was no formalist. His heart was in them. He loved the place where heart meets heart and love mingles with love, in the worship of God; hence he was sure to be there. But, my brethren, the voice of brother Smith will be heard in your prayer-meeting no more! In your consultations respecting efforts for Zion's advancement, you must henceforth feel the loss of his counsels. On you who survive, a weightier responsibility has fallen. Here then, on this solemn occasion, amid these solemn scenes, under the influence of this most moving dispensation of divine Providence, let me exhort you, my brethren, to lay yourselves anew upon the altar of your Saviour. And may your warmer devotion, your more fervid zeal, and more ready and untiring efforts in the cause of the Redeemer, make up to the church, the loss she has sustained in the death of one of her dearest and most useful members. If this shall be, God may soon fill his place by others, now in the broad ways of the world. Lord let it be thus!

But I must close with a few remarks to these mourning friends. I know how weak are words, in a time like the present. Words cannot express the anguish of Spirit which is felt by those who are most intimately concerned in the awful event which has brought us together. So neither can words, however wisely chosen, alleviate that anguish. A few days ago, my friends, how peaceful and joyous was your family circle! The father, the mother and the offspring were bound together

as one. Did the father come from the place of his daily toil, he was cheered by the smiles of wife and children; for O, how often have you with pleasure met him as he came to you. A few days ago, at your family board, he was present, and his presence rendered more delicious still the gifts which came from your heavenly Father's hand. A few days ago, and you all bowed at the family altar, while his voice ascended to heaven in your behalf. A few days since, and, arm in arm, you came to this holy place to pay your united vows to the God of heaven. But now it is all over. You will see him as he comes from that place of toil, as he sits at the head of your family board, no more. You will hear his voice, as in fervent accents it was wont to ascend from the family altar—you will come with him to this holy place of worship, *no more* forever. Under the influence of these solemn reflections, it is no sin to weep. A greater than any of us, wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany. And yet, there are considerations which should temper your grief. Your husband, your father, your friend, died a Christian. He has been taken to his Saviour and God. He is a companion of angels and glorified spirits. He has heaved his last sigh—he has felt his last pain—he has dropped his last tear. He is swallowed up in the fullness of God. Much as you loved him—severely as you feel his loss, you would not call him back from his blissful seat in heaven. No; rather, from this day, from amid these scenes of trial and overwhelming sorrow, let it be your steady aim to be prepared to join him in that glorious state. And, to speed you in this preparation, may the prayers which he offered for you in his lifetime return in richest blessings upon you all.—Amen.

INDEX.

SERMON I.

PAGE.

Evidence of the Divine Existence, - - - 13

HEBREWS ix. 6.—But, without faith, it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

SERMON II.

The Divine Excellence, - - - - - - - 24

PSALM viii. 1.—O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

SERMON III.

Man, considered in his Capacities, Relations and Destiny, - - - - - - - - - - 37

PSALM viii. 4.—What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

SERMON IV.

Universal Sinfulness of Man, - - - - - 48

ROMANS iii. 23.—For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

SERMON V.

PAGE.

Exceeding Criminality of Sin, - - - - - 57

Romans vii. 13.—Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid: But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful.

SERMON VI.

God in Christ reconciling the World, &c., - - 68

2 Corinthians v. 19.—To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

SERMON VII.

Repentance and Faith, - - - - - - - 80

Acts xx. 21.—Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON VIII.

Deliverance from the power of Darkness, - - 92

Colossians i. 13.—Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

SERMON IX.

Christians not of this World. - - - - - 107

John xvii. 16.—They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

SERMON X.

True Faith stands in the power of God. - - - 122

1 Corinthians ii. 5.—That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

SERMON XI.

Nature and Evidences of True Religion in the Soul, 137

2 Corinthians xiii. 5.—Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

SERMON XII.

PAGE.
Christian Sanctification, - - - - - - 153

JOHN xvii. 17.—Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.

SERMON XIII.

The Design, Means and Efficiency of the Christian Ministry, - - - - - - - - - 169

COLOSSIANS, i. 28—29.—Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

SERMON XIV.

Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, - - 183

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 8.—Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

SERMON XV.

Men will reap in Eternity according as they sow in Time, - - - - - - - - - - 194

GALATIANS vi. 8.—For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

SERMON XVI.

The Christian's Vows, - - - - - - - 206

PSALM cxvi. 14, 18.—I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people.

SERMON XVII.

The Sabbath a blessing to Man, - - - - - 217

ISAIH lvi. 2.—Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

SERMON XVIII.

PAGE.

Social Meetings, - - - - - - - - - 230

HEBREWS x. 25.—Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. as the manner of some is.

SERMON XIX.

Dancing by Professors of Religion, - - - 239

EPHESIANS v. 22.—Abstain from all appearance of evil.

SERMON XX.

Future Punishment eternal, - - - - - - 252

REVELATION xxii. 11.—He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.

SERMON XXI.

The reign of Christ, - - - - - - - - 265

REVELATION xi. 17.—We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty. which art, and wast and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

SERMON XXII.

The place prepared for Christians by their Lord. - 279

JOHN xix. 3.—And if I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am. there ye may be also.